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THESIS

THE PHOENIX OF FOREIGN POLICY:
ISOLATIONISM'S INFLUENCE ON U.S. FOREIGN
POLICY DURING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Douglas Earl Walker

December 1990

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The Phoenix of Foreign Policy: Isolationism's Influence
on U.S. Foreign Policy During the Twentieth Century

by

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ABSTRACT

Discontent with global relations is causing policy pressures which are reminiscent of pressures which existed when isolationism dominated American foreign policy. Among these pressures are; fear of abandonment or exploitation, preoccupation with domestic well-being and attendant dissociation from global relations, and advocacy of trade barriers to check foreign competition. This paper discusses isolationism's influence during three periods in American history--pre-World War I (1914 to 1916), pre-World War II (1922 to 1941), and the "Cold War" (1947 to the present)--to develop an understanding of isolationism in U.S. foreign policy, of isolationism's evolution from the traditional variant Washington advocated in 1796, and of isolationism's potential to again influence U.S. foreign policy.

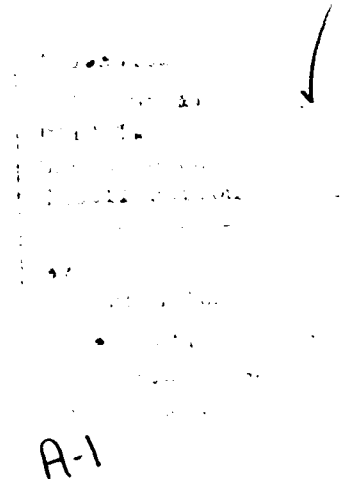


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I. INTRODUCTION

A. THE PROBLEM

"Isolationism" has influenced American foreign policy since the United States was founded, but the nature of isolationism has metamorphosed from its original manifestations. Although the period following the Second World War is notable for the negligible role isolationism has played in American foreign policy, the possibility exists that conditions might emerge which renew isolationist sentiment in the United States. The problem will be addressed primarily at the level of government policy formulation, and will occasionally refer to elite influence on foreign policy formulation where appropriate. Popular opinion will be referred to in those instances where such opinion is considered to be supportive of the purpose of this paper.

B. THE TERMS OF ISOLATIONISM

Establishing the meanings of the terms of reference for isolationism will contribute to clarity during this paper. Isolationism is regularly used to refer to any aversion to foreign involvement, but isolationism in American foreign policy has exhibited different variants. This paper will generally confine itself to four expressions of foreign policy involvement in discussing isolationism. These are;

traditional isolationism (neutrality), revisionist (strict) isolationism, non-interventionism, and interventionism. Where necessary for clarity, these terms will be used, otherwise the generic term "isolationism" will be used.¹

1. Isolationism

The term "isolationism" implies a strict refusal to enter into agreements of mutual aid and reciprocal obligations. A more accurate description of the foreign policy ideals of the pre-intervention period of World War I, however, could be "neutrality", or "traditionalist isolationism", in which the right to conduct commercial intercourse with any other country, even with warring belligerents, was a principle worthy of being defended.

Another form of isolationism is strict, or "revisionist isolationism". This form, advocates autarky and non-involvement, and dominated American foreign policy principles during the pre-intervention period of World War II. During this period, legislators attempted to define, and prevent a recurrence of, the events which led to American intervention in World War I.

¹ David L. Porter, The Seventy-sixth Congress and World War II, 1939-1940 (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1979), 1-15; Leroy N. Rieselbach, The Roots of Isolationism (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), 1-12; and Albert K. Weinberg, "The Historical Meaning of the American Doctrine of Isolation," American Political Science Review 34:3 (June 1940): 540-545, discuss the different terms relating to isolationism and internationalism. The four terms presented here have been distilled from the discussions of these gentlemen.

2. Internationalism

The counterpart to isolationism is internationalism, which supports active participation in foreign relations. As with isolationism, internationalism has two components, of which one is interventionism. Supporters of interventionism advocate a strong military which can be used as necessary to exert American influence in foreign affairs. War is a continuation of politics by other means--this well-worn Clausewitzian cliché is best amplified by another, more sparingly quoted principle Clausewitz provided--combat is to war as cash transactions are to business. Taken together, these two ideas provide the framework of interventionist perspective; the ability to prevail in combat is often a "bottom line" in politics.² Interventionist policies accept the possible need to exert military persuasion to support or defend uniquely American interests.

Examples of interventionist policy are rife in twentieth century American history. A strong military presence in Europe and the Mediterranean since 1948, the Vietnam Conflict from 1965 to 1973, a naval presence in the Persian Gulf since 1987, and the invasion of Panama in 1989, are four obvious examples of interventionism. Each example demonstrates America's willingness to use military force to

² Carl von Clausewitz, On War, translation by Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1908; New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1982), 119, 296.

support its interests, which is the essence of interventionist policy.

The second component of internationalism is non-interventionism. Proponents of non-interventionism support active participation in international relations as fully as do interventionists, albeit under the auspices of international organizations, such as the United Nations. Non-interventionists do not rule out the eventuality of using force; the discouraging lessons of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the League of Nations clearly demonstrate the frailty of international organizations which have no recourse beyond moral compulsion. Non-interventionists prefer, however, to restrain the use of military force to that conducted in a cooperative, multi-national effort only after other options, such as sanctions or embargoes, have failed. President W. Wilson's advocacy of the League of Nations after World War I, the Kellogg-Briand Pact in the 1920's, and U.S. support for the United Nations during the decades following World War II are but a few examples of non-interventionism.

C. THE ROOTS OF ISOLATIONISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Isolationism is firmly rooted in the earliest history of the United States, and a brief discussion of early American isolationism will contribute to developing the historical basis for the specific periods which are to be more fully discussed at a later point in this paper. Isolationism in early American international relations benefited from

America's geographical detachment, dominance of a virgin continent, and cultural-institutional divergence from European societies.³ These combined advantages afforded the United States a degree of confidence and righteousness regarding foreign policy-making which is clearly evident in early policy pronouncements by American leaders. When national interests were threatened, U.S. policy exploited the country's geographical insulation to keep Europe's dogs of war at bay.

1. Washington's Farewell Address

The most famous statement regarding American foreign policy was delivered one hundred ninety-four years ago. President George Washington's farewell address stated, in part,

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop . . . Why forego the advantages of [our detached and distant situation]? . . . Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world, so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it

³ Weinberg, 540.

Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies

The aversion with which American political leaders of the late 18th century viewed Europe was conditioned largely by the realpolitik in which the European governments were engaged. Repeatedly, alliances were forged, yet quickly broken when one party had achieved its goals, irrespective of the agendas of other alliance members. Additionally, French diplomats attempted to use the Franco-American alliance of 1778 to bind America to the aid of France in 1793 when Britain, Holland and Spain joined the German powers in opposing the French in February of that year. America was in a precarious position to lend support to France--British and Spanish colonies surrounded the United States on the North American continent, and British blockades could too easily hinder American trade with Europe.⁵ Neutrality provided the only course by which the new American government could protect its commercial interests and preserve its right to decide upon its own course.

Washington's farewell address stood, for over one hundred fifty years, as a warning against entangling alliances with Europe. His caution regarding the dangers of

⁴ David F. Long, ed., A Documentary History of U.S. Foreign Relations (Washington: University Press of America, 1980), vol. I, From 1760 to the Mid-1890s, 24.

⁵ Felix Gilbert, To The Farewell Address (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 116-119.

becoming involved in the intrigues and quarrels of the European powers was the first comprehensive and authoritative statement of the principles of American foreign policy, and encompassed the interests and ideals of the modern world's first constitutional republic.⁶ It sought to disengage the United States from what was viewed as the seething cauldron of power politics which was Europe, while conceding the reality of pragmatic foreign alliances during exigencies, and the essential need to expand commercial ties.

2. The Monroe Doctrine

Events in Europe during the early nineteenth century compelled the United States to take a firmer stance regarding its independence from Europe. The Monroe Doctrine, defined in President J. Monroe's 02 December, 1823 message to Congress, expanded Washington's policy statement. Monroe's statement further strengthened Washington's original policy and broadened the scope of U.S. interests, saying,

In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy so to do. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense

We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those [European] powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety . . . it is impossible that the allied powers should extend

⁶ Gilbert, 135-136.

their political system to any portion of either [American] continent without endangering our peace and happiness . . .

While Washington's policy was motivated by a desire to avoid becoming drawn into a European war, Monroe's policy statement was motivated by more defensive considerations. The Holy Alliance, formed by the monarchs of Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1815, was sworn to "protect Religion, Peace and Justice", and strongly supported the status quo. The alliance's members expressed a right to intervene in internal affairs of European powers to prevent or reverse changes wrought by revolution; actions taken by the Holy Alliance in 1821 and 1823 had protected the thrones of Piedmont, Naples and Spain. When the members of the Holy Alliance began to consider the task of restoring Spanish-American colonies in the New World to Spain, however, the U.S. government was compelled to assert its interests in the Americas, and to forestall the Holy Alliance's aims.⁸

The Monroe Doctrine specifically identified two points regarding America's interests in the hemisphere. First, it extended the protection of the United States to cover all of the Americas in an effort to ensure European colonial competition would not spill over to adversely affect the interests of the United States. Secondly, it once again

⁷ Long, 57.

⁸ Gordon A. Craig, Europe, 1815-1914, 3d ed. (Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1972), 19-24.

emphasized America's disinterest in Europe's affairs. The technology which existed during this period contributed to the confidence with which the United States was able to issue this proclamation of hegemony--even at the end of the nineteenth century, proximity to Western Hemisphere areas in dispute afforded the United States significant strategic advantages which were recognized by European powers.⁹

3. Isolationism in the Present

Modern technology has rendered geography meaningless, in most respects. Strategic missiles are capable of striking into the heart of any continent. Strategic bombers, with inflight refueling support, can remain aloft for extended periods. Nuclear-powered aircraft carriers can carry an air force larger than that possessed by some countries to almost any location where saltwater washes sand. Geographic isolation offers no defense anymore.

Economic isolation, if ever truly possible, is equally defunct. Washington discounted the idea of economic isolation when he said, "The great rule of conduct for us . . . is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible"[emphasis added].¹⁰ Washington recognized the reality of economic ties and encouraged these within limits. The increasingly

⁹ Theodore Ropp, War in the Modern World, 2d ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 184-187.

¹⁰ Long, 24.

interconnected, and interdependent, modern global economy belies the notion that any condition of economic isolation is possible. The speed with which actions of dictators in the Middle East can cause repercussions in the American economy clearly demonstrates the reality of the global economy, as do the economic difficulties in which a bastion of near-autarky--the communist economic system--finds itself today.

The early policies of the United States are still referred to in debates concerning the course of American foreign policy. Regardless of the full meaning of Washington's address, his admonition against alliances has been repeatedly read into the pages of the Congressional Record by advocates of American isolationism. During hearings on the North Atlantic Treaty in 1948, C. P. Nettels, a distinguished early American historian from Cornell University, opposed the formation of the Atlantic alliance, and suggested that Washington would be turning over in his grave in reaction to the deviation from his "great rule of conduct", as he referred to nonentanglement with Europe as the oldest and most valuable American heritage.¹¹

Opposing the isolationists were internationalists, of either ilk, who saw in America's values the framework of a system from which the entire world might benefit. The threat of the totalitarian system which followed the bayonets of the

¹¹ Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, The North Atlantic Treaty Hearings, 81st Cong., 1st sess., Part III, 1121.

Red Army, the lessons of Munich in 1938 and Berlin in 1948, and the potential to create a new world order on the ashes of the old after the "good war" of 1939-1945 compelled American policy to take an interventionist turn following the Second World War.¹² America's ascent to the pinnacle of world power brought with it a conviction that the U.S. system of ideals and values were the best possible model for world order, and an outward-oriented drive to communicate that system to the world.

This paper will first discuss American isolationist sentiment, and the actions of executive administrations in countering that sentiment, during the pre-intervention periods of World War I and World War II. These periods were selected due to the intensity of the isolationist versus internationalist debate occurring at the time. These discussions will provide an historic backdrop for a discussion of isolationism from the post-World War II, or "Cold War", period to the present. The conclusion will discuss the existence of conditions which have the potential to contribute to a resurgence of isolationist sentiment.

The following pages suggest that isolationist sentiment in the United States has passed through distinct periods since the pre-intervention era of 1914 to 1917, second; that each stage represents a metamorphosis worked by

¹² Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 117-125.

a severe external threat, and third; that the relaxation of the threat resulted in a renascent, yet altered, condition of isolationism. This study suggests an historical analysis of isolationist sentiment during the pre-intervention periods of the First and Second World Wars (1914 to 1917, and 1938 to 1941, respectively), and of the "Cold War" period (1945 to 1989), will contribute to understanding manifestations of isolationist attitudes which have recently emerged as a result of the diminution of the Soviet threat to American interests.

II. WORLD WAR I

The outbreak of World War One found the United States confident in the security of its position, both geographically and politically. U.S. diplomatic influence had achieved an apparent success by obtaining conditional agreement to the "Open Door" policy in China in 1901, and through that success had demonstrated the principles upon which the United States intended to base its foreign diplomacy. The U.S. Navy's success in countering the Spanish fleet during the Spanish-American war of 1897, and a great expanse of deep water which insulated the American continent, combined to create the impression of great security.

The Monroe Doctrine expressed popular American sentiment regarding the European powers, and the Venezuelan crisis in 1902 provided the opportunity for the the U. S. government to demonstrate its allegiance to the principles of the Monroe Doctrine by taking action to defend its interests in the Western Hemisphere. The joint punitive expedition undertaken by Germany and Britain in 1902 against the dictatorship in Venezuela was initially unopposed by the U.S. administration on the understanding that no "lasting" occupation of Venezuelan territory was intended by the allied powers. The U.S. was later forced to reverse its position by popular opposition to the apparent violation of the Monroe Doctrine,

and by concerns that the German government intended to challenge the Monroe Doctrine by acquiring territory in Latin America, from where it could potentially threaten the eastern approaches to the future Panamanian canal.

Germany's desires in the Western Hemisphere caused suspicions in the United States. The German efforts at Venezuela were apparently held in check by the threatening mobilization of Admiral Dewey's fleet in the Caribbean, Admiral von Tirpitz's interest in acquiring the Danish West Indies for a German naval base lent impetus to the American decision to buy the islands from Denmark, and the growing German navy was viewed by American naval advocates as the foremost challenge to U.S. interests. U.S. efforts regarding the Open Door policy and China in the Far East represented, to German leaders, the desertion of the isolationist doctrine by the United States, and nurtured their ambition to further defy U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere.¹³

The principles contained in the Monroe Doctrine and the Caribbean Policy, which recognized the strategic importance of the isthmian canal and sought to protect U.S. access and

¹³ This brief discussion of American diplomatic history is based largely upon Samuel Flagg Bemis, The United States as a World Power: A Diplomatic History, 1900-1955 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), and is intended to present a background on general issues which shaped American foreign policies shortly before World War One. Holger H. Herwig also discusses German-American rivalries during the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries in Politics of Frustration: The United States in German Naval Planning, 1889-1941 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 13-106.

control of the waterway, largely illustrates the widespread attitude in the United States prior to World War One. Except for disparate occasions when American influence was exerted to further the principles of democracy and sovereignty, as in the Open Door policy, successive administrations adhered to the concept of the United States being an inviolable sanctuary from the caprices of European politics, and quite capable of enforcing the Western Hemisphere's freedom from intrusions by the established powers of Europe.¹⁴

The attitude of being hegemonic in the Western Hemisphere and disassociated from events in Europe continued to dominate American political thought into the twentieth century. Popular American awareness of the capabilities of U.S. influence was not matched by an awareness of the degree to which that influence was interwoven with the powers of Europe--a point best illustrated by President W. Wilson in May, 1916 when he stated, regarding the objects and causes of the war, "we are not concerned. The obscure foundations from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore."¹⁵ Former U.S. ambassador G. F. Kennan discusses the widespread American sentiment that the European war was a natural result of the

¹⁴ George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), xi.

¹⁵ Address by Woodrow Wilson to the First Annual Assemblage of the League To Enforce Peace, 27 May 1916, cited by Kennan, 63.

complicated politics and inter-governmental rivalries of the Continent, all of which were of no concern to the United States--in his words, Americans dismissed the "real interests and aspirations of other peoples . . . as unsubstantial and unworthy of our attention, as 'jealousies and rivalries' too silly, too 'complicated,' to deserve our respect."¹⁶

The American public was generally unaware of the causes of the war. The New York Times announced the beginning of the war with headlines which stated Germany had declared war on Russia, and France was mobilizing and might be drawn in later. The causes were simplified to indicate a wanton Austrian attack upon 'little Serbia' [sic], and editorials pointed to Germany's failure to restrain its ally as a clear indication of a deeper 'Teutonic scheme'. The 'democracy versus imperialism' concept of the war's roots supported the moral verdict imposed by popular opinion, and Britain's ultimatum to Germany on 03 August seemed to vindicate the propriety of popular U.S. opinion.¹

The confluence of Anglo-American opinion had been heightened by British support for the United States against what was viewed by the Wilson administration as a European plot instigated by Germany. The Anglo-German naval rivalry during the early 20th century gave rise to the American belief that Britain and the United States, which was being pressed by German interests in Latin America, shared a common

¹⁶ Kennan, 63-64.

rival in Germany. Another significant contribution to the shaping of American opinion at the beginning of the war was Britain's control over the news. Cutting the German trans-Atlantic cables within the first week of the war placed Britain in the enviable position of controlling the vast majority of European news at a time when the world was defining the issues and assigning war guilt.¹⁷ As general disinterest towards any European affair which did not directly impinge upon American interests limited most Americans' abilities to formulate balanced judgements regarding responsibility for the war, popular American opinion proved to be a blank slate which was receptive to manipulation by groups which sought to further their specific schemes.

American naivete' regarding European politics also supported the Wilson administration's commitment to maintaining U.S. neutrality as the major powers in continental Europe staggered into war during the final half of 1914. Alliances which were both secret and overt, and real and implied, ensnared the democracies and the dynasties, bound them one to the other, and pulled them all over the precipice. These countries hurtled down into the maelstrom of a war which whirled ever faster and ever more violently as

¹⁷ Walter Millis, Road to War: America 1914 to 1917 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1935), 42-56; and Ernest R. May, The World War and American Isolation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 38-49.

it approached the totality which Clausewitz declared was the nature of all wars.

The foreign policies of Wilson's administration were primarily concerned with defining and protecting the status of America's neutrality during the pre-intervention period, which lasted from August, 1914 until April, 1917, and his re-election during this period presents evidence of popular support for this policy. As the Continent's war endured longer than many had supposed possible, and as the war validated Clausewitz by its expansion, the issues of neutrality became more critical. The support or sympathy of neutral countries offered belligerents the ability to deepen their strategic base¹⁸ by serving as a source of supply for war materiel, foodstuffs, and other consumables upon which both the armies and the populations of the warring countries depended.

The Wilson administration's failure to recognize the degree to which U.S. interests were bound up with those of Europe, and subsequent failure to actively define (or lack of willingness to support) the policies of American neutrality accordingly, gradually eliminated the policy options

¹⁸ The term 'strategic base' is used here to refer to the support structure which connects a country at war to its soldiers. A strategic base might include, but is not necessarily limited to: popular support, industrial production, political support, agricultural production, and other diverse means by which a country concentrates, orchestrates, and focuses its potentials into a violent expression of will.

available to the U.S. If Wilson or his advisors had recognized the degree to which the Entente powers would bind American interests to the success of the Entente, the policies of neutrality might have been more decidedly neutral, even to the point of accepting less economic growth for the purpose of protecting that neutrality. As it was, the Wilson administration became increasingly pressed to define U.S. neutrality in ways which benefitted the Entente in order to support the interests of the United States, although those definitions marked the path to war. These conditions combined to ensure that American intervention was inevitable.

A. MAKERS OF WILSON'S FOREIGN POLICY

The sources of American foreign policy during the early part of the war were shaped less by public opinion or intelligence reports than by the "consciences and notions of duty and national interest" of the Secretary of State, the Counselor of the Department of State, Wilson's personal friend and advisor, and Wilson himself. This structure for formulating American policies regarding neutrality issues presented many opportunities for personal convictions to unduly influence the ultimate course which U.S. policy was to take. As the administration's policies affecting neutrality developed, the United States was incrementally drawn into closer association with the members of the Entente Cordiale (Britain and France), until war with the members of the Dual

Alliance (The German and Austro-Hungarian Empires) became unavoidable.

Kennan refers to the manner in which American leaders shaped U.S. neutrality policies to benefit the Entente powers, and credits the policy-makers of Wilson's administration with the foresight to have recognized the danger which a German victory over Britain would have posed to American interests.¹⁹ This hypothesis is credible, especially in light of the tensions which existed between the United States and Germany during the first part of the twentieth century--as previously discussed, Germany had coveted areas in Latin America, which might have potentially threatened the planned trans-isthmian canal. Additionally, Germany's efforts at colonial expansion directly challenged American expansion in Samoa, the Phillipines, and West Indies during the 1890's and 1900's. The strained relations between the two powers grew until Germany was viewed, by many American statesmen and military leaders, as the only possible opponent with which the United States might have to contend.²⁰ The natural rivalry between these two growing powers lent to the suspicions each held for the other's intents.

¹⁹ Kennan, 64-66.

²⁰ Herwig, 13-106, presents an excellent and thorough discussion of the strained relations between the United States and Germany during this period.

1. Robert Lansing

The policy-making apparatus in the Wilson administration was, at the outbreak of the war, embodied in the Counselor of the Department of State (an office roughly comparable to the present Under-Secretary of State), Robert Lansing. The sudden death of Wilson's wife inflicted a grievous shock on the president at a time when his leadership was most required for shaping American opinion and policies, and when Wilson appealed to the American people for their assistance in "maintaining a state of neutrality during the present European war" on 19 August, it was already too late.²¹ The decidedly pro-Entente slant given to the majority of the news coming into the United States from Europe ensured that although the majority of Americans strongly supported neutrality, their sympathies were with the Entente.²²

Prior to his service in Wilson's administration, Lansing was a New York lawyer with a reputation as a scholar in the field of international law. These characteristics of his background, plus his association with former Secretary of State J. W. Foster (as the former Secretary's son-in-law) placed Lansing among the East Coast elite who were heavily exposed to British influences. Lansing saw diplomacy's

²¹ Millis, 57-58.

²² Daniel M. Smith, The Great Departure: The United States and World War I, 1914-1920 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 3-5.

purpose as being to uphold the law and to support the interests of American business, and these motives were reflected in his decisions during the first part of the war.

Wilson soon recognized the potential importance of American policy decisions and began to exercise increasing control over those decisions. Lansing continued to provide policy advice to the president, and after Bryan resigned in mid-1915, Lansing was appointed to the office of Secretary of State.²³ While he was pro-Entente at the outset, Lansing became increasingly so as the war endured--a diary entry made by Lansing in September, 1916, illustrates his perception of appropriate U.S. foreign policy goals;

Nothing in our controversies with Great Britain must be brought to a head. We must keep on exchanging notes because if we do not we will have to take radical measures. . . .

Nothing can move me from my fixed purpose to remain on friendly terms with Great Britain. I only hope that the President will adopt the true policy which is "Join

²³ May, 48-49. May points to the bombing of Antwerp, and the subsequent issue of what would constitute an appropriate U.S. response to the German violation of an open city, as an identifiable turning point for the Wilson administration. Prior to this point the Counselor of the Department of State, Robert Lansing, was largely responsible for formulating U.S. foreign policy for the Wilson administration in regard to the belligerents participating in the European war. The President settled a dispute between Lansing and Bryan concerning the U.S. response to the bombing, and afterwards, Wilson apparently recognized the potential for long-range implications of American policy, and became increasingly involved in foreign affairs, and the question of neutrality.

the Allies as soon as possible and crush the German Autocrats." If he takes drastic measures against Great Britain, he will never be forgiven. . . .²⁴

2. Edward M. House

Edward M. House was another presidential advisor who championed the Entente's cause. An unofficial advisor to the President, House held a more Continental view of the balance of power than advisors in Wilson's administration, and believed U.S. interests would be best served by preserving Britain's friendship and enlarging the relative power and influence of the United States. House embraced a balance of power vision which was different from the views of Lansing--Lansing's support for pro-Entente policies seems to have been guided by economic and legal considerations--since Britain and France were America's best customers, policy decisions which supported commerce with them must have seemed the proper course, especially when those decisions were legally justifiable. House, in contrast, viewed rivalries and conflicts as inherent to international relations. He regarded the balance of power in Europe and the coincidence of British and American interests as essential for the protection of the United States in particular, and the West in general, and feared antagonism between Russia and the West

²⁴ From a diary entry dated 30 September, 1916, contained in Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920, National Archives, Washington, D.C., vol. I, 131; cited in May, 332. Millis, and Arthur S. Link, Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), also refer to Lansing's personal support for Great Britain.

if Germany was unable to provide a protective barrier. American interests, in House's mind, would have justified an Anglo-American alliance at the very beginning of the war.

That there were similarities between the views held by House and those held by Lansing, however, is illustrated by a diary entry made by House in November, 1916,

We not only have foreign countries to deal with, but the President must be guided. . . . His tendency to offend the Allies . . . is likely to lead us into trouble with them. If we are to have war, let it be with Germany by all means.²⁵

Thus a coincidence of opinion existed between House and Lansing. Both exerted great influence on Wilson's policy decisions, and as a result it was likely that the United States would, when faced with a decisions which could not avoid adversely affecting the goals of one set of belligerents or the other, shape that decision to support the Entente and justify it in the name of American neutrality.

3. William J. Bryan

William J. Bryan was possibly the most decidedly neutral of Wilson's policy advisors, although his role ended with his resignation in mid-1915. He was an fervent supporter of disarmament and arbitration, and argued strongly for measures through which America might be protected from involvement in the European war. Bryan saw as his primary objective regarding the war the prevention of its spread,

²⁵ House Papers, diary entry date 17 November 1916, cited in May, 333.

especially to America. He hoped to prevent public sympathies from being too closely attached to either alliance, and personally conducted negotiations to keep German radio stations in America operating during the pre-intervention period. An ardent advocate of avoiding the slightest semblance of alignment, Bryan supported the strictest interpretations of neutrality. His resignation in mid-1915 came, however, after a dispute over policy with Lansing regarding neutrality was decided against him by Wilson, leading Bryan to believe he no longer had the confidence of the president.²⁶

4. Woodrow Wilson

As the final step in policy formulation, Wilson's opinions were the most critical for the foreign policy process. He was viewed by House as being 'one of the most contradictory characters in history,' a reference made to the many paradoxes which shaped his character and outlook. Generally accepted, however, is the importance of moralism in Wilson's approach to all issues--any policy decision was weighed carefully against Wilson's conception of justice and propriety. But peace did not necessarily outweigh national interests for Wilson. He stated, during a speech in Kansas during February, 1916, that "There is a moral obligation laid upon us to keep out of this war if possible. But by the same

²⁶ Merle E. Curti, Bryan and World Peace (Northampton, MA: 1931); cited by May, 37-38.

token there is a moral obligation laid upon us to keep free the courses of our commerce and of our finance." Wilson may have weighed policy alternatives for their "rightness", but political and economic considerations found their way onto his scales as well. He was generally not given to policies which were speculative or slow-working, but often pressed for immediate and ideal solutions. The degree to which Wilson allowed Lansing to shape policy during the initial part of the war was an aberration--Wilson's demonstrated view of the presidential role in making foreign policy had previously been almost autocratic, as with the Mexican crisis from March 1913 until the outbreak of World War One.²⁷

5. Public Opinion

The American public was, as stated above, generally isolationist. Although sympathetic to the cause of the Entente, American sympathy did not translate into interventionism; millions of Americans were immigrants or first-generation Americans and either cherished (or hated) their country of origin sufficiently to wish it well (or ill)

²⁷ This discussion of Wilson and his closest advisors is drawn largely from May, 37-47, 54-61, 63-64, 73, 75, 146-150, 157, 172-178, 241, 367-368; Millis, 10, 22-27, 44-45, 48, 77-80, 87-89, 106-107, 196, 222, 228, 262-265, 329-334; Smith, 2, 16-18, 24-27, 33-34, 44, 47-49, 58-59, 72-74, 76-79; Edward H. Buehrig, Woodrow Wilson and the Balance of Power (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1955) also discusses the structure of the Wilson administration's policy-making apparatus. Wilson's character is further discussed by Link, and by Barbara W. Tuchman, "Can History Use Freud? The Case of Woodrow Wilson," The Atlantic 219:2 (February 1967): 41-44.

in the war, but not sufficiently to spill their own blood in its cause.

Geographically, internationalism tended to be concentrated in the northeastern United States, especially near the population centers, with isolationism becoming more predominant as the distance from the eastern seaboard increased. Industrialized areas tended to be more internationalist than rural areas, and education lent itself to developed internationalist perspectives. American opinion was not generally united until March, 1917, when the publication of German Foreign Minister Dr. A. Zimmermann's suggestion to Mexico that a German-Mexican alliance against the United States would be rewarded by Mexico's retrieving portions of the United States which it had formerly possessed. The widespread furor which greeted the dissemination of Dr. Zimmermann's communication with the Mexican government arguably united American opinion against Wilhelmian Germany more than any other single event--before the telegram was revealed, interventionist sentiment was largely concentrated in the eastern United States. Afterward, the southern and western parts of the country became more prominently anti-Germany.²⁸

²⁸ Thomas A. Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1944), 1-11, presents a concise discussion of American public opinions preceding American intervention in World War I. May and Millis touch on the subject as well.

To develop a better understanding of the issues which concerned the public and the Wilson administration prior to American participation in World War I, this paper will organize the issues into two broad areas. The first will be issues which address American commerce, both with the Entente powers, and with those of the Alliance. The second area will address shipping issues, and will discuss Wilson's policies regarding the defense of American shipping rights, and toward Germany in response to that country's declaration of unlimited submarine warfare.

B. NEUTRALITY ISSUES

Two inter-related areas form the basis for discussing American policies during the pre-intervention period of the United States. The first area concerns the issues of commerce. Early on, the Wilson administration decided to allow the free export of war materiel from America, which benefitted the Entente considerably more than it did the Alliance. Another issue in this area lent further support to the munitions trade--Wilson modified a previously strict policy which restricted extending credit to the European belligerents. Allowing American capital to be made available to Britain and France supported the Entente's war effort. Although technically within the bounds of legality and precedent, these policies contributed to the Anglo-American community of interest, and restricted the latitude available to Wilson in his foreign policy decisions.

The second area of neutrality issues in which American policies generally favored the Entente is that of shipping interests. During the pre-intervention period, Wilson's defense of American neutrality regarding these issues formed the basis for American relations with the European belligerents. The ramifications of selectively supporting issues which affected U.S. neutrality ultimately resulted in a declaration of war by the United States against the German Empire. The unequal response of the Wilson administration to violations of neutral shipping rights established the chain of events which determined American intervention in the war.

This chapter will discuss the Wilson administration's policies in the two areas outlined above, and how those policies supported of France and Britain, to the detriment of the interests of the German and the Austro-Hungarian Empires. Modifying or selectively applying policies in the above-mentioned areas enabled Wilson's administration to shape U.S. neutrality to make it more supportive of American aims, with the result of drawing the United States into the European war.

C. COMMERCE ISSUES

1. The Arms Trade

The dependence of the Entente upon U.S.-manufactured war supplies was exceeded only by the willingness of the Wilson administration to allow the export of arms and

ammunition destined for the French and British armies. An arms embargo, similar to embargoes which were enacted by other neutral countries, might have been more supportive of strict neutrality, but it would not have supported American economic growth. This combination of dependence and interests gave rise to the war materiel trade which developed between the neutral United States and the Entente members.

Ironically, the political interest of the United States in allowing the arms trade to flourish was grounded in Wilson's desires for disarmament after the war's end. Wilson feared cutting off the supply of weapons to France and Britain would send an irrefutable signal that failing to maintain a high degree of military preparedness during peacetime could be a potentially fatal error.²⁹ Lansing also advocated tolerance of the arms trade by advising Wilson that not only was such trade lawful, but to interfere with it would have been contrary to international practice.³⁰ The British ambassador to the United States, Sir Cecil Spring Rice, was aware of Wilson's vision of the U.S. playing a leading role in achieving world disarmament, and aided his country's cause by suggesting to British Foreign Minister Sir Edward M. Grey that if Wilson supported such an embargo, it

²⁹ Lansing Papers, I, 124-125, cited by May, 48-49.

³⁰ Lansing Papers, I, 124-125, cited by May, 48-49.

could disqualify the American administration from the role of impartial mediator.³¹

The rationalization that interfering with the export of munitions could be considered a gesture of support for the militaristic Alliance against the democratic Entente gratified Wilson's concern for the morality of allowing such exports to continue. Predictably, this justification was supported by Alliance sympathizers, and American industrialists who were benefitting from weapons contracts.³² Wilson found further moral vindication in the sentiment that the U.S. policy allowed any country to purchase American munitions and only a chance of fate had created the conditions which precluded the members of the Alliance from ensuring the shipping communications which would have made the U.S. arsenal available to them, whereas Britain's command of the sea lanes helped ensure a steady communication of supplies from the United States.³³ This moral justification of America's willingness to sell arms to the Alliance powers was supported by Germany's ready acceptance of the Wilson

³¹ Millis, 58.

³² Millis, 99-101.

³³ Literary Digest, XLIX (19 December 1914): 1208; cited by May, 48. The implications of U.S. acquiescence to Britain's command of the sea lanes is yet another issue, which will be discussed below--at this point, it is sufficient to note that U.S. interpretations of shipping issues greatly aided Britain's domination of the Atlantic while impeding the Alliance's efforts to gain access to U.S.-manufactured war materiel.

administration's arms trade policy during the early part of the war, although the German government contended (once the war had become mired in the trenches in 1915), that American arms were prolonging the war by supplying munitions to the Entente.³⁴

Economic interests also pressured Wilson into countenancing the munitions trade. Wilson emphasized, during his 1912 campaign for the presidency, his concern regarding the dangers recession and stagnation held for to the American economy, if industrial exports were not increased.³⁵ Being then confronted with conditions which had the potential to be extremely favorable to U.S. economic growth, Wilson's courage in initially discouraging Americans from garnering profits from the Europeans' horrors must be acknowledged, but the benefits of the war for the U.S. economy must also be acknowledged. Entente orders for explosives, as an example, increased from \$2.8 million, during March, 1915 to \$32.2 million during November of the same year.³⁶ American business interests welcomed the opportunity to expand their

³⁴ May, 47.

³⁵ John Wells Davidson, ed., A Cross Roads of Freedom, The 1912 Campaign Speeches of Woodrow Wilson, cited by N. Gordon Levin Jr., Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1968), 14-16.

³⁶ Charles C. Tansill, America Goes to War (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1938), 139-140.

production, and eventually became dependent upon the Entente's war orders.³⁷

The timing of the war's outbreak and the resulting growth in exports was fortuitous for American economic interests. The balance of trade stood heavily against the United States in mid-1914, and an estimated \$250 million in credits were to fall due in London by the end of the year. The war interrupted U.S. agricultural exports, which would normally have offset the trade imbalance, and brought about an urgent necessity to establish a flow of exports to Europe,³⁸ which was answered by Britain's need for war materiel.³⁹

Sir George Paish and Basil B. Blackett, representatives of the British Treasury, worsened the anxiety of American bankers in October, 1914, by indicating that

³⁷ Harold C. Syrett, "The Business Press and American Neutrality, 1914-1917," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 32:2 (September 1945): 217-218.

³⁸ Joseph V. Fuller, "The Genesis of the Munitions Traffic," Journal of Modern History 6:3 (September 1934): 283-284.

³⁹ Grey noted in his memoirs that these supplies were "necessary to carry on the war at all with any chance of success" in Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-five Years, 1892-1916 (New York: 1925, vol. II, 107; cited by Fuller, 280. May, 320-322, shows that by the end of 1916, however, British concerns regarding the possibility of an American arms embargo had compelled them to take steps to mitigate the dangers such action would have presented, steps which included distributing munitions orders to other countries (such as Canada), and building factories in England for the purpose of making munitions. May argues that by the beginning of 1917 an American munitions embargo would have been inconvenient, but not disastrous.

British financial interests expected the \$250 million in obligations to be paid in full. Paish did not offer any plan for extending the obligation, nor did he forecast any means by which the stagnant agricultural market could be improved; instead he offered the suggestion that the trade imbalance would be resolved by the end of the year due to the increasing British demand for war materiel, even to the point of the United States becoming a creditor nation. As the trade developed, Britain bound American industry even more tightly to interdependence by tying the availability of raw materials (especially wool and some alloys of steel) which were needed by American industries to fill war orders to assurances that neither the raw materials, nor articles containing them, would be re-exported to the enemies of the Entente.⁴⁰

American interpretations of neutrality regarding munitions trade created a strong tie which bound American interests to the Entente. Exporting munitions and military stores boosted American industry and alleviated fears that British financiers would call due notes which could ruin American bankers. Paish represented his country's interests well by first playing upon the fears of the bankers, and then offering the temptation of financial gains exceeding the simple repayment of debt. Earlier predictions by industrialists had foreseen no gains beyond those accrued

⁴⁰ Fuller, 288-292.

from trade which would normally have gone to the belligerents; the opportunity to benefit from the war needs of the Entente was a welcome surprise to American business.⁴¹ Since American sympathies were already largely pro-Entente, the lure of financial gains under the cloak of legality which had been bestowed by Lansing virtually guaranteed that any effort to restrict the export of war materiel to Europe would be met with grave resistance from two quarters--on one hand, industrialists and financiers would not be likely to remain silent while restrictions were placed on opportunities to garner profits from a great demand for goods and financial capital. On another, Entente supporters would be equally as unlikely to forego the opportunity to enlist the industrialists and financiers to support their own agenda.

Two efforts to impose an arms embargo did occur, however. The first was forwarded by pro-German interests and succeeded in placing bills to restrict arms exports before Congress during late 1914. Wilson's and Lansing's reviews of the export policy revealed the degree to which such an embargo would affect the economic interests of the United States, and even the normally pacifist Bryan believed arms exports should be continued, writing that,

. . . any action looking to interference [sic] with the right of belligerents to buy arms here would be construed as an unneutral act, not only because the effect of such

⁴¹ Syrett, 217.

action would be to assist one party at the expense of the other, but also because the purpose of the resolution is plainly to assist one party at the expense of the other.⁴²

The second attempt to impose an arms embargo occurred during early 1916, but achieved even less success than its predecessor. Nor would it have had the import of the earlier embargo attempt. A critical shortage of shells in 1915, combined with London's need to ensure an adequate shell supply, even in the face of a vengeful United States, had moved Lloyd George to concentrate on building munitions factories in the United Kingdom, and to transfer some munitions orders to Canada. An American embargo in 1916 might have caused a more frugal munitions policy and some inconvenience, but it would not have been disastrous.⁴³

Had the United States wielded its advantage in arms production more skillfully earlier in the war, Britain would have been more responsive to the issues of American neutrality rights, and conceded the rights of American vessels to conduct trade in non-contraband goods with the Alliance powers. This trade, in turn, could have mitigated pressures within the Imperial German government to conduct unrestricted submarine warfare. While any discussion of historical events is shrouded in afterthought and second-guessing, some evidence points to the German government's decision to resume aggressive submarine patrols as a measure

⁴² May, 47-49.

⁴³ May, 44-45, 189-190, 320-322.

taken in response to British efforts to isolate Germany economically as much as to inhibit the Entente's access to war supplies. Wilson's policy decisions in regard to the issue of the arms trade, therefore, were too late and too conservative to achieve the intended purpose of protecting American neutrality. The earlier decision to protect America's economic recovery through allowing the arms trade to continue was also counter-productive in the long term, as it almost guaranteed American vessels would become targets for German torpedoes.

2. Financial Issues

Bryan's early efforts to ensure the United States would not be drawn into the European conflict moved him to advocate strict interpretations of non-involvement, and he approached Wilson during the first month of the war to persuade the president to discourage U.S. banks from lending money to the belligerents, a position which Wilson supported.⁴⁴ Bryan's reasoning was flawless--financial interest in the outcome of the war would virtually guarantee U.S. citizens would attempt to exert their influence on American involvement and threaten what he perceived as the preeminent goal of U.S. policy--to avoid involvement in the war.⁴⁵ The availability of U.S. financial capital might have

⁴⁴ Smith, 34-35.

⁴⁵ From a memorandum from Bryan to Wilson, 10 August 1914, contained in Lansing Papers, 131-132, cited by May, 38.

mattered little had the war been as short as most observers supposed it was to have been. As the war continued, the Entente's increasing dependence on American goods exhausted their available supply of dollar credits, and the Wilson administration came to realize that the Entente would not be able to continue purchasing American goods without financial assistance.⁴⁶

As stated previously, Wilson was aware of the financial benefits which the United States, suffering from a recession, would accrue from business with the European belligerents. His initial efforts to define the boundaries of American neutrality somewhat belies the 'economics conspiracy' theory as a rational explanation for U.S. involvement,⁴⁷ as does his request for authority from Congress to restrict commerce with the Entente in retaliation for British transgressions against American trading interests.⁴⁸ Had Wilson intended to involve the United States in the European war from the outset, restricting U.S. support for the Entente countries at any point would have been clearly contrary to U.S. interests. As previously

⁴⁶ May, 43-48.

⁴⁷ Charles Seymour, American Diplomacy During the World War (Baltimore: Little, Brown and Co., 1934), 118, cites the proceedings of the Nye Committee to support his arguments against Wilson being coerced, convinced, or duped into involving the United States in the war for economic reasons, as does May, 195.

⁴⁸ Seymour, 53-55.

discussed, while his advisors might have been unabashedly pro-Entente, Wilson exerted enormous influence in America's policy towards the belligerent European powers; actions taken by Wilson to chastise the Entente cannot be discounted.

Financial issues, therefore, are not the issues which ensured U.S. intervention on behalf of the Entente, but the financial and commercial ties between the United States and the Entente members can be argued to have been conducive to, and illustrative of, the conditions which ultimately led to a confrontation between the United States and Germany. The ties are illustrative in the sense that they demonstrate how American neutral policies were favorable to the Entente. They were conducive to the conditions precipitating the confrontation in that increased Anglo-American trade, in combination with restricted trade between America and Germany, could not have avoided creating beliefs among both belligerents, and non-belligerents, that the interests of the United States were more in line with those of the Entente than with those of the Alliance.

The rapid development of the American war industry made the issue of loans to the belligerents moot. Although Lansing is indicated as the origin of the proposal that Wilson modify his earlier decision regarding loans to the European belligerents, even the strictly neutral Bryan recognized the degree to which continuing the loan ban could

impair the U.S. economy.⁴⁹ U.S. Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo emphasized the restrictive nature of the loan ban by writing to Wilson that the members of the Entente would be unable to pay for American exports without depleting their gold reserves and precipitating a general bankruptcy unless access to large loans was granted. Bankruptcy on the part of the Entente would then have caused, in Lansing's words, "restriction of outputs, industrial depression, idle capital, financial demoralization, and general unrest and suffering among the laboring classes."⁵⁰ A means by which to allow American bankers to operate around the ban was therefore needed.

The loan ban was ameliorated by a politically savvy maneuver. Lansing composed a memorandum which removed commercial loans from the purview of the ban, and signed it after Wilson had approved the text. Although the memorandum had been approved by the president, it was exhibited to financiers privately and contained the disclaimer,

The above are my [Lansing's] individual impressions of the conversation with the President, who authorized me to

⁴⁹ May, 40-46, supports the argument that Lansing was not ardently pro-ally, but was instead concerned primarily with the legal implications of U.S. neutrality, particularly regarding claims for post-war settlements, and secondly with advancing economic growth for the United States, where such growth did not conflict with American neutrality. A key point Lansing used to persuade Wilson to allow loans to be made to Britain was that the Entente would simply take their financial business elsewhere, such as Canada, Australia, or Argentina.

⁵⁰ Smith, 34-37.

give them to such persons as were entitled to hear them, upon the express understanding that they were my own impressions and that I had no authority to speak for the President or the Government.⁵¹

This method of abrogating the conditions of the loan ban enabled the administration to deny that any change had taken place, when in actuality the original prohibition had been significantly diluted. The loan ban modification was advantageous to both alliances--the Germans were also seeking financing for their war effort--but equally so. The Entente would have been placed in a difficult position without American dollar credits for continuing the arms trade with the United States.⁵²

The importance of financial support for Britain is demonstrated by the trade deficit which developed. Having already borrowed nearly \$2 billion in the United States by the end of 1916, British Treasury representatives were engaged in an effort to secure further American loans solely on the strength of the British government's credit, to cover a projected need for nearly \$10 million per day in American imports. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George viewed U.S. financial support as sufficiently important to express concerns in November, 1916 about the war's lack of progress

⁵¹ Memo by Lansing, 23 October 1914, Lansing Papers, I, 140, cited in May, 46.

⁵² May, 44-48.

possibly impairing American willingness to extend credit to Britain.⁵³

Commerce issues remained undiminished in importance throughout the pre-intervention period. The ability to sustain large armies in the field caused the European belligerents to become heavily dependent upon their strategic bases to continue the war, and U.S. production of war materiel made the United States a critical portion of the strategic base of the alliance which could influence American behavior, and as a result America found itself in the position of being subjected to the efforts of both alliances to reduce the strategic base of the other at the same time the Wilson administration was trying to define its neutrality policies to serve what it believed to be American interests.

The commerce issues discussed above illustrate how Britain succeeded in progressively coopting American support. Lloyd George's acknowledgement of Britain's early dependence upon U.S.-manufactured materiel demonstrates that the English recognized the importance of American support, as does Grey's early efforts to maintain good relations with the Wilson administration.⁵⁴ After the war had settled into stalemate and foreign financing became essential to continue the war,

⁵³ May, 323-333.

⁵⁴ May, pp. 8-33, and Millis, pp. 29-30, both discuss the efforts of Grey to maintain Anglo-American relations in the best possible state through the early months of the war, even in the face of opposition from other British government officials.

the Anglo-American commercial ties placed the Wilson administration in an increasingly untenable position. Any action against the Entente would impair U.S. economic interests and alienate Entente sympathizers and commercial interests simultaneously.

D. SHIPPING ISSUES

Both alliances recognized the supply lines which crossed the Atlantic were primary targets for interdiction. These powers sought to control these lines through the best methods available to them. The methods through which the belligerents sought to control the Atlantic lines of communication, and the interpretation of American neutrality issues regarding those methods, constitute the shipping issues of the pre-intervention period.

The Wilson administration's inclination to shape American neutrality through policies which supported the Entente's interests, and the resulting merger of American interests with the Entente's clearly reduced the administration's ability to respond appropriately to infractions of U.S. neutrality rights. As the economic well-being of the United States became dependent upon Entente war orders, Britain became increasingly able to assert the terms under which shipping operated, and did so with increasing emphasis on wartime expediency and with decreasing regard for U.S. interests. Wilson recognized the degree to which American interests were being compromised, but U.S. ties to Britain

and the Entente supported policy decisions which avoided confrontation with the Entente powers.

After the war, Colonel House voiced the opinion that, except for more serious transgressions which were perpetrated against U.S. interests by Germany, conditions might have developed which would have made it impossible for the United States to avoid war with Britain. Britain's efforts to blockade Germany, and to extend that blockade to the maximum depth possible, repeatedly encroached upon American neutral rights.⁵⁵ Avoiding direct confrontation with Britain regarding American shipping interests enhanced Britain's position. The degree of support contributed by the U.S. to the Entente, combined with the increased effectiveness which Britain's breaches of international law afforded Britain's extended cordon, provided the impetus for Germany to retaliate with the most effective naval weapon it could employ at the time. The submarine, in its turn, brought the United States fully and finally into the war.

The subject of shipping issues contains four general areas. The first three areas address British control of supply lines through methods which included mining, contraband definitions, and blacklists, and how U.S. reactions to the British efforts to control shipping failed

⁵⁵ Thomas A. Bailey, "The United States and the Blacklist During The Great War," Journal of Modern History 6:1 (March 1934): 14-16. The specific issues which comprise the British violations are discussed in a later part of this chapter.

to demonstrate commitment to upholding the avowed neutrality rights of the United States. The British decision to interdict all supplies going to Germany regardless of the contraband status strengthened the arguments of Germany's submarine warfare advocates and ensured the confrontation between Germany and the United States. The fourth area addresses the submarine issue, and will discuss how rigid U.S. reactions to unrestricted submarine warfare created the conditions which ultimately mandated American involvement in World War One.

1. Mining

Shortly after the war's beginning, Britain claimed Germany had violated international law by planting prohibited mines in the North Sea. Germany's denial of having technically violated the law, and the non-committal response of the United States, encouraged an ascendent spiral of retaliatory measures against shipping which ultimately escaped the Wilson administration's ability to define and enforce neutral policies which would have protected U.S. interests. The proximate cause for American intervention derived from this failure.

The mining of the North Sea in late 1914 was one of the earliest measures of shipping control exercised by the British. By declaring the North Sea a war zone, mining it, and making ships' safe passage through the English channel dependent upon embarking Admiralty pilots, Britain ensured no

vessel could approach Scandinavian or German ports without submitting to a search for contraband. May argues that Britain's primary interest in mining the North Sea was military--German submarines were damaging the British fleet, and the British War Office feared a possible invasion--the enhancement of the extended cordon was simply a beneficial side-effect.⁵⁶ The American government registered no complaint when the mining was announced, largely because the zone decree had virtually no effect on American interests. Although international law was vague regarding the legality of the British minefields, Wilson was predisposed to believe that Anglo-American disputes were primarily over matters of administration, not of principle, and felt confident in the morality and legality of the British position.⁵⁷

2. Contraband

The U.S. State Department received the first British contraband list within a week of Britain's declaration of war. Moved by what this portended for American interests, the State Department reacted within hours by suggesting to all belligerents that they abide by the Declaration of London, an unratified agreement drafted in 1909 which codified sea law in wartime.⁵⁸ Committees composed of naval

⁵⁶ Winston Churchill, World Crisis, Vol. I, 490; cited in May, 25.

⁵⁷ May, 50-52.

⁵⁸ Millis, 52-53.

officers and lawyers advised conditionally rejecting the American proposition by proclaiming the Declaration to be in effect, subject to certain modifications and exceptions. The committees' decisions were heavily influenced by reports of food and supplies being shipped into the neutral port of Rotterdam, and thence on to the German army in Belgium--accepting the Declaration as it had been drafted would have made it impossible to stop these shipments.⁵⁹

Codification of the Declaration of London might have resolved numerous important shipping issues at the outset of the war, but codification would also have eviscerated Britain's extended cordon. May argues that the general feeling in London supported the view that World War One would be a short war, and therefore the expediency of interdicting supply lines to the Alliance outweighed the military value of American friendship.⁶⁰ Domestic politics also precluded the British government from accepting the Declaration. Significant factions within the government had opposed it during peacetime; to adopt it during war could result in the overthrow of the government. Adopting the Declaration would preclude the use of economics as a weapon for the British, plus virtually guarantee that a portion of what they shipped by sea would be returned at high velocity over the battlefield. The matter was argued through proposals and

⁵⁹ May, 16-17.

⁶⁰ May, 18-20, 42-44.

counter-proposals; Spring-Rice encouraged his government to temporize, believing that the weight of American opinion and Wilson's reluctance to employ extreme measures in retaliation would reward patience. He was right--the final U.S. position was to withdraw its demand for recognition of the Declaration of London and replace it with the insistence that traditional international law be recognized.⁶¹

Millis argues that international law was never clearly violated by Britain, was simply modified to meet Britain's needs. Since the majority of U.S. foreign trade at the time was carried in British bottoms, these became, not surprisingly, generally unavailable for trade with any powers other than the Entente. Neutral shipping could not get insurance with Lloyds, and the growing possibility of seizure due to having violated British contraband lists further increased the chances of a neutral shipper losing everything on the high seas.⁶²

Other writers take a different view. According to recognized international law at the time, paper blockades were illegal--a blockade had to be effectively maintained by an adequate force for it to be binding--and even enemy goods were safe on a neutral ship, if they were not contraband and if they were not destined for a blockaded port. Absolute contraband referred to goods exclusively use for war and

⁶¹ May, 20-25; Millis, 53, 83, 88-90.

⁶² Millis, 83-85.

destined for an enemy country, even if passing through a neutral port (the rule of "continuous voyage"). Conditional contraband, in contrast, referred to goods which may have a peaceful use but which were also susceptible of use in war and which were destined for the armed forces or a government department of a belligerent state (the rule of continuous voyage did not apply).⁶³

If Britain applied traditional international law to its dealings with neutral shipping, it was only in that manner which suited British needs. The distinction between conditional contraband and absolute contraband became blurred and all but non-existent. Since a blockade was impossible for the British to maintain effectively at the time, their interpretation of the law allowed surveillance over all neutral shipping the Royal Navy could interdict (the "effective cordon"), presumed an enemy destination unless otherwise proven, and disregarded the rule of continuous voyage.⁶⁴ This practice virtually assured, in concert with British control of the sea lanes, Britain's ability to deter commerce between the United States and Germany.

⁶³ Edgar Turlington, Neutrality, Its History, Economics, and Law (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1936), volume 3, The World War Period, with a preface by Philip C. Jessup, cited by Bemis, 127-128.

⁶⁴ Richard W. Van Alstyne, "The Policy of the United States Regarding the Declaration of London, At the Outbreak of the Great War," Journal of Modern History 7:4 (December 1935): 434-447; also Bemis, 131-137.

Britain also circumvented international law by defining contraband to suit its needs. London was cautious at first to avoid antagonizing the large section of American opinion resident in the southeastern United States by assigning cotton, tobacco, resin, or turpentine to its list of conditional contraband, food was defined as conditional contraband at the outset, and the previously mentioned items were simply not accepted as cargo by any shippers wishing to avoid the capriciousness of British prize courts. Senators from southern states interceded with Bryan on behalf of their constituents, but little was achieved; cotton was not on any contraband list at the time, there was no clear violation of law to protest, and within the U.S. there existed no widespread support for the southerners' cause--the industrial sections were strongly pro-Entente and dismissed the protests as being the perennial concerns of the agrarian.⁶⁵

The British did not actually seize foodstuffs being shipped to the Alliance powers before March, 1915; Britain effectively discouraged the export of foodstuffs bound for Germany or for neutral Scandinavian countries by diverting such shipments into British ports. An attempt to challenge British policy during March, 1915 failed when the Wilhelmina, an American ship manned by an American crew and flying an American flag, attempted to carry food directly to Hamburg. The ship's mission entailed more than commercial transport--

⁶⁵ Millis, 83-87.

it was intended as a test case to determine the rights of neutrals to ship food directly to Germany. Delicately balanced agreements which had been arranged between Bryan and Grey prior to the ship's departure from Norfolk, Virginia were toppled by an order issued by the German Federal Council during the ship's transit. The Council's order complicated the issue of defining contraband by ordering the seizure of all corn, wheat, and flour in the German Empire. The British considered her cargo contraband, despite German assurances that the cargo would be distributed only to its civil population and offers to allow American distributors ensure compliance.

3. The Blacklist

Britain also extended the effective cordon by enacting the Trading with the Enemy Act on 23 December, 1915. This act forbade British subjects from trading with enemy subjects living abroad, and with persons or organizations in neutral countries engaged in lending aid to the enemy. The published version of the act provided a helpful list of persons or organizations which met its criteria for suspicions of trading with the Alliance, and being included on this list held the promise of financial ruin for an American firm. Inclusion on the blacklist portended a potentially omission of any firm from lucrative Entente commerce and carried with it concomitant isolation of the

firm from business with other American firms, lest the stigma be transferred like a bacillus.

Although the publication of the blacklist aroused Wilson's ire when it began including U.S. firms in July, 1916, evidence indicates that a more extensive confidential blacklist had included American firms almost since the beginning of the war. The sub-rosa list was not enforced by legal penalties, but was instead enforced by the cordon--no firm on either list was permitted to ship goods through the blockade, and British shippers were discouraged by the British government from shipping goods consigned by a blacklisted firm.⁶⁶

Public opposition to the blacklist policy required action of the administration, and action was taken. In September, 1916 Congress passed the Shipping Act and the Revenue Act, which empowered Wilson to take measures to severely restrict Anglo-American commerce. A study undertaken at the time clearly indicated that such action would be a two-edged sword, as American industry would have been severely affected and would have invited serious reprisals without guaranteeing British concessions. Wilson did not use the powers at the time.⁶⁷

The intense feeling in the United States was further assuaged through productive diplomatic channels. Legally,

⁶⁶ Bailey, 1934, 15-19.

⁶⁷ Bailey, 1934, 23-25.

Britain had the sovereign right to forbid her own subjects to trade with firms in America. But the need to maintain American support led Britain to acknowledge the blunder of the blacklist and offer considerable regret, but little real modification, in order to reconcile the opposing viewpoints.⁶⁸

Believing the interests of the United States lay with acquiescing to British policies affecting shipping, Wilson's administration again allowed the neutrality agenda to be determined by an external source whose interests were not those of the United States. Wilson had no reason to believe that firm action taken by his administration would be widely supported; when the threat of applying an embargo in retaliation for British violations of U.S. shipping rights had the potential to be effective, popular sentiment was predominantly supportive of the Entente for commercial and emotional reasons. Although an important section of political power (the Southern democrats were a significant source of support for the Democratic incumbents) was being hurt by British actions, there seemed to be no clear violation which could be protested, and the economic damage was limited in comparison to the benefits of Entente business.

The dangers of Britain's effective cordon soon manifested themselves. The British Admiralty made no effort

⁶⁸ May, 329-334; Bailey, 1934, 27-34; Millis, 327-329.

to conceal its intent to prevent any supplies from reaching the Alliance; statements made by Churchill in February, 1915 show his confidence in the apparent success of the Entente navies in "throttling" Germany, and the Admiralty's intent to maintain the pressure until Germany surrendered unconditionally.⁶⁹ Allowing the British blockade of Germany to be incrementally tightened without protest further bound the United States to British policies. Britain extended their cordon even further through a policy, enacted in February, 1917, which prohibited all trade to an enemy destination, or the transportation of enemy property, unless licensed by, or submitting to examination by, an Entente power. U.S. protests against this declaration were ineffectual, and since the practical accomplishment of this policy had already been achieved by the British minefields, the protests were also moot. The earlier surrender of neutrality rights in response to a policy which seemed innocuous presaged the later ineffectiveness of protesting what had already been accepted.

British control of the sea lanes made the cordon a powerful weapon for degrading Germany's ability to continue the war. Britain attempted, throughout the war, to increase its control over all commerce between America and Europe, and the responses to British infractions of American neutrality ranged from non-existent to notes of protest which rarely

⁶⁹ May, 218.

contained specific terms or demands. U.S. industry's dependence upon Entente trade made it nearly impossible for the president to enact the embargoes which had the ramifications necessary to compel the British to accede to American desires.

4. The Submarine

The issues of the cordon and the blacklist further illustrate the creeping erosion which undermined America's neutrality throughout the pre-intervention period. The belief that an accident of geography and Britain's maritime superiority provided the moral justification for American trade to be restricted to the Entente powers presupposed that the Alliance powers would be unable to react effectively. Wilson's tacit surrender of neutrality set the stage for the German government to be forced to yield to the pressures of military leaders and proclaim, in February, 1915, a war zone around Britain in which unrestricted submarine warfare would be used to impose a blockade. German recognition of the inequality of American policy during this time is evidenced by a remark made by German Minister of Marine Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz to a United Press correspondent shortly before Christmas in 1914,

America has not raised her voice in protest and has taken little or no action against England's closing the North Sea to neutral shipping. What will America say if Germany declares war on all enemy merchant ships?⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Tirpitz quote cited by Millis, 102.

Wilson's decision to hold Germany "strictly accountable" for any American loss of life as a result of submarine warfare was a poor attempt to achieve what would have been better achieved by prohibiting American citizens from taking passage on Entente ships--the presence of an American on a belligerent merchant vessel did not make the U.S. responsible for that vessel, as Wilson's ultimatum to Germany implied. Furthermore, the terms of the ultimatum highlight another point concerning neutrality issues. Protests against British transgression routinely left significant negotiating latitude, and did not stake the honor and reputation of the United States on the belligerents response, whereas the notes issued to Germany clearly drew lines beyond which American prestige would demand a response. This incongruence led Bryan to cite the improbity of acquiescing to British efforts to force a German surrender by inducing hardships upon Germany's civilian population as an argument to support premature efforts for peace negotiations.⁷¹

U.S. policies contributed to the inevitability of the clash. Besides the policy decisions discussed above, a decision reached by the U.S. Neutrality Board in March, 1915 legalized the entry into American ports of armed British merchant vessels, an action which encouraged Britain's decision to arm its merchants. Once a vessel is armed, and issued orders to attack any submarine on sight, as was the

⁷¹ Millis, 153.

case with the British merchantmen, the status of those merchant vessels comes into question. Under these circumstances an attacking submarine could provide the warning and opportunity to abandon the vessel being attacked, as the law of the day required, out of fear for its own safety. The combination of conditions which precluded a submarine from surfacing to provide the requisite warning with the deception of flying of neutrals' flags, as British vessels occasionally did, virtually guaranteed American vessels would fall prey to German submarines.

The British liner Lusitania, sunk by the German submarine U-20 on 07 May, 1915, brought to a boil the issues concerning American neutrality and Germany's decision to employ the submarine to counter Britain's dominance of the sea. The sinking of the Lusitania caused the loss of 1195 lives, of which 124 were Americans. This great loss of life would be tragic under any circumstances, but in the spirit of the times, the event was trumpeted by many (predominantly Eastern-based) newspapers as confirmation of the murderous barbarity of Wilhelmine Germany, religious figures called for America's thunderous wrath to be loosed upon the barbarians, and prominent Americans lent their voices to popular demands that the President immediately demand satisfaction from the Kaiser.⁷²

⁷² D. F. Fleming, The Origins and Legacies of World War I (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968), 206-209; and Millis, 172-174 both note that vehement reaction to the

The measured response of the Wilson administration sought to obtain that satisfaction without forcing the United States into an untenable position. Diplomatic processes, conducted through a series of notes, expressed the American government's sentiment that submarines could not be employed without compromising U.S. neutrality rights and issued stern warnings to the Germans should American lives again be lost in such a manner. The sinking of more British and Italian liners, many of which incurred the loss of more Americans, led to a hardening of American resolve against submarine warfare which forced Germany's government to mitigate, in May, 1916, the submarine campaign to avoid war with the United States.⁷³

The German government held to its agreement to limit the scope of its submarine warfare until January, 1917, when German military leaders again pressured that government to remove the fetters from its submarine commanders in an all-out effort to secure an armistice from the Entente by August.

sinking of the Lusitania was centered in the eastern United States, while the western part of the country reacted much more moderately. This suggests that while the reaction against the human tragedy of the sinking was nearly universal, the pro-Ally/pro-intervention portions of the populace found in the event the opportunity to further goad public opinion towards supporting a confrontation with Germany.

⁷³ Thomas A. Bailey, "The Sinking of the Lusitania," American Historical Review 41:1 (October 1935): 57-62, presents a concise summation of the issues which the submarine campaign imposed upon German-American relations during this period.

The likelihood of America's entry into the war due to this action had been clearly demonstrated by the earlier diplomatic crisis which submarine warfare had incurred, but if the campaign was successful, the German militarists argued, the war would be decided before the United States could make any significant difference. This argument might have been sound had Wilson been slower to react, but several events combined to hasten America's entry into the war. One was the publication of the Zimmerman note, which greatly aided the unity of American opinion regarding war with Germany. Another was the sinking of three American ships returning to port in Mar, 1917. Yet another was the virtual standstill which the renewed submarine campaign had imposed upon American shipping. The combination of events served to press the United States into a declaration of war upon Germany.

E. FAILURES OF TRADITIONAL ISOLATIONISM

These issues demonstrate the most danger of attempting to maintain a neutral position without clearly defining that neutrality, and without taking action to defend the principles upon which it is based. It is impossible to make an unequivocal argument which connects alternate responses to the issues of American neutrality during World War One with a more fortunate outcome. It is possible, however, to argue that gradually surrendering neutrality rights, and shaping policies which benefitted one group of belligerents

over another, contributed to the desperation which led Germany to embark upon its campaign of submarine warfare which was clearly a proximate factor in America's entry into the war.

The United States believed, prior to the First World War, that it was the master of its own fate and dominant within its own hemisphere. Its relied upon isolation from the powers of Europe as a means of ensuring it would not be troubled by what seemed to be petty rivalries. Yet isolationism's influence on American policy prior to America's entry into the war clearly worked against U.S. interests. By being unaware of the import of seemingly unimportant factors which influenced Europe--the growing unrest of nationalism in the Balkans, the pressure of a vital and expanding Germany, and the decline of a moderating and stabilizing Britain--the United States government was completely unprepared to identify how best to exert its influence in defense of its own interests.

Traditional isolationism supported the practice of selling weapons to the belligerents and loaning the money with which the weapons were to be purchased while expecting to be happily aloof to the conflagration abroad. The ships which plied the seas between the United States and Britain carried with them the means for Britain to maintain its war effort, and the sinking of those ships represented, for Germany, the opportunity to impede the Entente's

capabilities. Given these conditions, the United States could not reasonably expect to be untouched by the rigors of war.

Defending America's neutrality rights might have prevented the United States from becoming involved in the European war had that defense been rigorous and even-handed. As this chapter indicates, however, those neutrality rights were slowly eroded by Britain through its command of the sea lanes, and by the Wilson administration, through failing to recognize the leverage it possessed during the early part of the war and failing to use that leverage to require the Entente powers to recognize legitimate American interests. As the war developed, that leverage was lost and Britain's control of the sea became too firmly ensconced to challenge.

Another aspect which contributed to the erosion of consideration for America's neutrality rights was the degree to which popular American opinion supported the cause of the Entente. Whether that opinion was founded in pro-Entente propaganda, in cultural roots and similarities, or in geopolitical considerations is not pertinent--as discussed above, the U.S. population at large was sympathetic to the cause of the Entente powers, as well as to the cause of profit. To have issued the same ultimata to Britain as were issued to Germany would have required the Wilson administration to have been prepared to take either military or trade actions against Britain, steps which would have been

strongly resisted by the populace. When instruments to chastise Britain for infringing upon American rights were finally developed, Britain's foresight in developing alternate sources of supply had already forestalled their potential effectiveness.

Isolationism placed blinders on the development of American foreign policy. America's preoccupation with its own affairs and geographic self-assurance created, as Kennan stated, a denial

of the legitimacy of the real interests and aspirations of other peoples . . . [a] dismissal of these things as unsubstantial and unworthy of our attention, as "jealousies and rivalries" too silly, too "complicated," to deserve our respect⁷⁴

The Wilson administration, and the influence of the populace in general, failed to recognize two ideas which spoke strongly against isolationism--first, that the United States could be so profoundly affected by events in Europe. Decades of conditioning and the arrogance of nationalism effectively argued against this idea's acceptance. Secondly, that it is generally more efficient for a country to exert its influence to support its interests, rather than defend them. The distinctions are of premeditation and urgency, and the United States, as a democracy, may be ill-prepared to support its interests in a calculated and pragmatic fashion, instead of defending them in a strident and self-righteous manner.

⁷⁴ Kennan, 64.

When America entered the First World War, it should have been apparent that isolationism had failed to achieve its goal. The war was clearly European in its origin, but American ships were underway and American troops were carrying arms. Once the war had ended, it is only logical that policy-makers would seek to understand why the failure had occurred, in order that it might be avoided later. The next chapter addresses the period between the two wars, and how the search for an answer to the question of isolationism's failure brought isolationist influences once again into American foreign policy, with results which were even more devastating for the United States, and the world, than had already been experienced.

III. WORLD WAR II

U.S. policy aims strove, until American involvement in World War I, to adhere to traditional isolationism as a means by which the United States could avoid becoming involved in war which had developed from another country's actions or interests. When Europe went to war in 1914, traditional isolationism was the most fully-developed and widely supported tenet of American foreign policy. It was therefore espoused as the guiding principle for the Wilson administration, and widely supported by elected representatives and their constituents, until a culmination of events served to align popular consensus behind American involvement.

Arguably, traditional isolationism did not fail of its own accord but was forsaken by a president's administration which conspired to develop a "benevolent neutrality" which supported the cause of the Entente at the expense of the Alliance powers. The U.S. insistence on its right to manufacture and export war materiel to Britain condemned an indeterminate number of German soldiers to death just as surely as U.S. acquiescence to British "black lists", extended cordons, and North Sea mining programs aided Britain's efforts to starve Germany into submission. The aim of war is to defeat the enemy, and the United States should

have benefitted from the lessons of its own Civil War in realizing the import of disrupting strategic support for one's enemy during a war. Recognition of that lesson might have altered the U.S. approach to munitions export and blockades, thereby averting the crucial showdown between Germany and the United States over the submarine issue.

But the greater lesson which the United States missed lay in the impropriety of isolationism of any form as a guide for policy in modern international relations. Isolation impaired America's ability to recognize the issues which drove Europe to war. This lack contributed to two distinct failings in American foreign policy. First, it led the U.S. government to discount the importance of the issues, causing the Wilson administration to attempt to develop policies which would enable the U.S. to tread the middle path, where no path actually existed. Secondly, it placed the American populace at the mercy of skilled manipulators of opinion, with little moderating influence from its own government. The "democracy versus totalitarianism" cast given the war by British opinion leaders was a skillful ploy which avoided the root causes of the war in favor of an easily communicated message which was well-received by the American public.

During the period between the end of the First World War, in 1918, and the beginning of American involvement in the Second World War, in 1941, historians and legislators sought to understand why isolationism failed. From that search came

the new form of isolationism, revisionist isolationism. This type of isolationism was an even more developed form of isolationism than its predecessor, as it developed during a period in the United States which was marked by an inward turning of American attention. One popular view held that America had been forced to militarily intervene in a European war to defend its neutral rights and protect democracy in the world, and two principal matters shaped American attitudes towards Europe: war debts and reparations. Craig and Gilbert state,

In the wave of postwar nationalism most Americans saw only that they had come to the rescue of the Western democracies in a great war, that they had played a decisive part in the winning of that war, and that the United States had little to show, in the way of material gain, for the immense sums of money that had been expended and for the loss of American lives.⁷⁵

A. INTERNATIONALIST EFFORTS

1. The League of Nations

The twenty-three year inter-war period which separated American involvement in World War I and World War II witnessed numerous unproductive attempts by American internationalists to use U.S. influence to achieve cooperative measures for peace. The U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles largely out of opposition to the entangling alliance which the League of Nations, as part of the treaty, represented. Article X of the League covenant

⁷⁵ Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, The Diplomats: 1919-1939 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 301.

was the crux of the strongest objections to American membership; the article provided mutually guaranteed territorial integrity and political independence for League members, supported by a pledge of economic and military sanctions against violators contained in Article XVI. These articles led opponents of collective security, such as a leading isolationist Senator W. E. Borah, to claim that membership in the League would sacrifice U. S. political freedom of action and would involve the United States in constant war in attempts to maintain the status quo. President W. Wilson was committed to collective security, and his refusal to accept Congress-supported reservations on Article X to allow the United States to remain neutral if U.S. and League Council opinions adjudicating responsibility for hostilities differed virtually guaranteed the Treaty's defeat.⁷⁶

Internationalists forwarded arguments to make League membership palatable to proponents of American neutrality. These arguments centered on the League's dependence upon moral suasion and its lack of any means by which a member could be forced to support League tenets with military force. League supporters suggested the resolution of boundary disputes between Yugoslavia and Albania in 1922 and Italy's retreat from Corfu in 1923 as examples of the League's

⁷⁶ Robert A. Divine, The Illusion of Neutrality (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 1-5.

contribution to world peace through applying the moral judgement of mankind to international relations.⁷⁷ These arguments were insufficient to bridge isolationist sentiment; membership in the League was firmly opposed by the Senate, and President W. G. Harding pronounced the League dead to American foreign policy shortly after his election and refused to answer League communications thereafter.⁷⁸

2. The World Court

Another effort by internationalists to bring American moral, if not military, influence into international relations centered upon the World Court. American membership in the Court received widespread support from both internationalists and non-interventionists through its espousal of the primacy of law over force, and its lack of obligations; membership would entail, for the United States, only administrative obligations--participation in the selection of judges, and providing a share of the court's expenses, estimated at \$40 thousand per year.⁷⁹ Although U.S. membership in the World Court gained substantial Senate approval, isolationist legislators ultimately forestalled

⁷⁷ Norman A. Graebner, America as a World Power: A Realist Appraisal from Wilson to Reagan (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1984), 5-7.

⁷⁸ William E. Borah, cited by Karl Schriftgiesser, This Was Normalcy (Boston: Little, Brown, Inc., 1948) 132.

⁷⁹ Congressional Digest, May, 1923, p. 239; and Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st sess., 18 December 1925, p. 1085. Cited by Graebner, 9-11.

actual participation by insisting that a series of reservations be attached to American membership. These reservations included the right for the United States to exercise all powers of a full member without being committed to Court decisions, and a prohibition against the Court's rendering an opinion on any issue which touched upon an interest of the United States. The Court countered by insisting upon the right to impose its own reservations, and the resulting impasse ended the question of U.S. membership in late 1926.⁸⁰

3. The Kellogg-Briand Pact

The Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 presented the accomplishment on paper of peaceful law. Signed by nearly every government, it renounced war as an instrument of national policy and advocated peaceful means to resolve all disputes. The Senate ratified the pact in January, 1929, Secretary of State F. B. Kellogg offered assurances to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the treaty did not bind the United States to take any action--the treaty contained no provisions for sanctions or commitments for enforcement, only a moral obligation not to aid an aggressor country.⁸¹ The main value of the Pact was that it provided a means by which American opinion could be shaped, in the event

⁸⁰ Donna F. Fleming, The United States and the World Court (Garden City: 1945), 40-43, 56.

⁸¹ Divine, 5-8.

of a future conflict, to curtail trade with an aggressor and thereby tacitly cooperate with League actions against violators. Although not an actual alliance, the treaty was, at least, a constructive departure from strict interpretations of isolationism and neutrality.

4. The Fallacy of Internationalist Arguments

The vehicles of international involvement--the League, the World Court, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact--supported the international status quo by recognizing the primacy of law over force. They supported settling of disputes through negotiation instead of force, and in doing so, ignored the dynamics of international relations and the fervor of nationalism, and attempted to subordinate political disputes to jurisprudence, with no clear means by which to enforce decisions. Clausewitz's On War illustrates the point. If the Clausewitz statement, "The decision by arms is, for all operations in War, great and small, what cash payment is in bill transactions it can never entirely fail to occur."⁸² is combined with, ". . . War is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce,"⁸³ the resulting syllogism is simple--at some point, the ability to conduct war becomes essential to conducting politics. Any organization purporting to settle disputes without means by

⁸² Clausewitz, 133.

⁸³ Clausewitz, 119.

which to impose decisions upon dissatisfied petitioners has made hollow promises. Examples can be found of this is in the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931-1932, and in the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1936. In both instances, the League's inability to develop a consensus for action against the aggressors allowed the invasion to continue unopposed by serious, internationally supported force.

This shortcoming was especially critical in the world system which evolved out of the First World War. International relations were riddled with instabilities-- reparations were forced upon Germany which were unjust and impossible to collect, Bolshevism was creeping beyond the borders of the Soviet Union, and the division of Europe by the war's victors was, in some cases, arbitrary and insensitive to nationality issues. These inherent tensions would soon join with the ineffectiveness of the international organizations at enforcing decisions to bring about the collapse of the world system.

Most isolationists (and their internationalist counterparts, the non-interventionists) recognized, in arguments against American participation in collective security arrangements, the requirement to support law with force, and the danger which that requirement would pose for the United States. N. A. Graebner credits realists of the 1920's as having recognized the vacuity of claims made by League and Court proponents regarding the future

effectiveness of adjudications made by international organizations without recourse to enforcement.⁸⁴ A Utopian view of international politics assumes every nation which has agreed to submit to arbitration will abide by the resulting decisions, a perception which has been repeatedly belied by reality. A more current example of the fallacy of this is presented by an editorial opinion by leading conservative columnist G. F. Will, who observed,

Recently the United States has used force to punish Libya for sponsoring terrorism, has hijacked a plane to capture hijackers, has supported insurgency to change the government of Nicaragua and has changed the governments of Grenada and Panama . . . each was at best of uncertain "legality." . . . "international law" is often . . . defined in ways that serve the ruthless by inhibiting only the scrupulous.⁸⁵

During the 1920's, support for U.S. membership in the League or the World Court gained strength from its moral correctness, and the potential for extending American ideals to the relations between countries by asserting the primacy of law over force. Such support failed to account for nations which were willing to support their claims by resorting to force of arms in conflict with world opinion. Nazi Germany's position viz the status quo was elucidated by Hitler to Britain's Lord Halifax in late 1937 when he said,

The League system means the perpetuation of the status quo. It is useless to evade the issue by saying that Article 19 of the covenant provides for peaceful

⁸⁴ Graebner, 10-12.

⁸⁵ George F. Will, "The Perils of 'Legality'," Newsweek 10 September 1990, 66.

revision. . . . It is impossible to imagine peaceful revision with the consent of all. . . . It is a fact, perhaps an inconvenient fact, that Germany is now a great and powerful nation, pulsating with energy and determined to realize what she believes to be her legitimate aspirations.⁸⁶

Hitler's statement illustrates that his understanding of the impact of realpolitik and force on international relations far outstripped the understanding held by League members seeking to regulate political relations by the influence of law. No organization could have dealt effectively with the ruthlessness of fascist leaders of the 1930's without having clear recourse to force.

Had the simple policy of avoiding membership in international organizations been sufficient to guarantee neutrality, the United States would not have become involved in the First World War. Forced to recognize that traditional isolationism was an ineffectual foreign policy during the twentieth century, American legislators sought to understand isolationism's failure, and prevent its recurrence through legislation based upon what they came to understand. Revisionist isolation as a foreign policy principle evolved from perceptions which were forwarded by historians and legislators, and influenced American foreign policy from the mid-1930's until President F. D. Roosevelt began succeeding in his efforts to easing the restrictions which neutrality

⁸⁶ Hitler quoted by the Earl of Birkenhead, Halifax (London, 1965), 371; cited by Graebner, 32.

legislation during the pre-World War II period placed upon his administration.

B. THE ARMS TRADE

1. The Arms Embargo Issue of the 1930's

The issue of the American arms trade was the crucible in which principles of American neutrality were tested by fire during the 1930's. The U.S. Congress, moved by revisionist arguments that the arms trade had been the proximate cause of American involvement in World War I, sought to find the means by which to prevent arms merchants and financiers from creating conditions wherein the United States found its future tied to the cause of one set of belligerents in a war. The years following the Kellogg-Briand Pact witnessed a number of Congressional resolutions to impose arms embargoes during conflicts to achieve the goal of true disassociation from a war which did not directly affect the United States. One such resolution was introduced by Representative T. E. Burton, another by Senator A. Capper, and yet a third by Representative S. Porter. All were aimed at different aspects of the arms embargo question, and varied primarily in the scope of an embargo, and the assignment of authority for its enactment. Burton's resolution favored a blanket embargo, with exceptions determined by Congress. Capper's empowered the President with the authority to determine which country had violated the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and to embargo arms exports to that country. Porter's simply

empowered the President to embargo arms exports to countries where conditions of domestic violence or international conflict existed or were threatened.⁸⁷ Each of these resolutions failed, for similar reasons.

Arguments against arms embargoes repeated nearly verbatim positions elucidated by neutralists in the Wilson administration during the first pre-intervention period. The main opposition to selective arms embargoes was the concern that enacting an embargo against a single country carried the taint of an "un-neutral" act; imposing an embargo could have been argued to be a punitive sanction for violating pre-determined codes of behavior. Isolationists feared that selective embargoes would therefore invite reprisals from the countries against which they had been used.

Additionally, entanglement continued to be the ineluctable opposition to any form of arms embargo forwarded--just as Wilson's administration had formed the opinion that an arms embargo against one belligerent country was ipso facto support for its rival, opponents to arms embargoes in the 1930's presented the same argument. Later efforts to impose arms embargoes against Japan for its invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and against Bolivia and Paraguay, participants in the undeclared Chaco War of 1932 to 1935, came to naught as principal factions which opposed embargoes--munitions manufacturers and traditional isolationists--

⁸⁷ Divine, 7-17.

united against pro-embargo factions, which were politically divided between supporters of discriminatory embargo measures, and advocates of impartial measures.

2. The Senate Munitions Investigating Committee

The efforts of arms manufacturers in opposing arms embargoes backfired, however. Two books published in 1934 forwarded the argument that arms-makers conspired to foment war and disrupt world peace for the purpose of profit.⁸⁸ Due largely to publicity from these publications Senator G. P. Nye's proposal for an investigation into the munitions industry, initially destined for a lingering demise in the Senate Military Affairs Committee, gained widespread popular support and quick acceptance. Nye was chosen to chair the committee, and of seven members, four (including the chair) were isolationists, two were moderates, and only one advocated collective security--the committee's purpose could be easily argued to be more concerned with finding proof that the arms industry was responsible for U.S. involvement in foreign wars, than with objectively investigating any connection between the two. The strong popular support for the committee's investigation precluded the administration

⁸⁸ Divine cites the books, H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen, Merchants of Death, (Boston, 1934); and George Sides, Iron, Blood and Profits, (New York, 1934), as being similar in premise while attributing the responsibility for war to different sources. According to Divine, Sides views arms merchants as having primary responsibility, while Engelbrecht and Hanighen place responsibility on an international order which allows arms-makers to thrive on conflict.

from opposing it in favor of using international cooperation to deal with the arms problem.⁸⁹

3. The Arms Embargo and the Roosevelt Administration

President Roosevelt and his administration opened a new era in American foreign policy. Cautiously, the new president and his administration began looking beyond American shores, even as they attended the economic crisis which had developed in 1929. The issue of an arms embargo against Japan again came to the fore in 1932, and after initial vacillation on the administration's part, was pressed to a vote in the face of strong Republican opposition. The new resolution carried with it powerful undercurrents of internationalism; the President was empowered to enact an arms embargo, and efforts to calm fears that a war with Japan would be the outcome should such an embargo be enacted included assurances that it would only be imposed in cooperation with other nations. This international flavor was not lost on Senate minority leader H. Fish, who claimed,

. . . there is just one reason, and that is to go in with the League of Nations, to declare an embargo against Japan, as the aggressor nation in the Far East, and have the United States declare that embargo, with those European nations, against Japan.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Selig Adler, The Uncertain Giant: 1921-1941 American Foreign Policy Between The Wars (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), 161-167.

⁹⁰ Divine, 45-46.

Fish sought to amend the resolution to make it apply impartially, but his effort was defeated on the House floor before the resolution was put to a vote.

Roosevelt undercut the resolution, however, when it entered the Senate. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Senator K. Pittman, communicated to the president its refusal to accept the resolution unless it contained the impartiality clause. Roosevelt acquiesced to these terms. This transformed the nascent arms embargo resolution from a vehicle through which the United States could cooperate in collective security measures to an isolationist effort to avoid involvement in foreign wars.

Divine suggests Roosevelt's preoccupation with domestic economic reconstruction, and his desire to maintain solid support in Congress for the Glass-Steagall banking reform and the National Recovery Act, which were still under consideration, as possible reasons for the President's reversal of position on the arms embargo resolution. The early New Deal deliberately excluded international economic cooperation, and in doing so was distinctly isolationist. Divine argues one point clearly--by early 1935, arguments concerning American foreign policy were not concerned with whether that policy would have an isolationist or an internationalist cast--that argument had by then been settled in favor of isolationists.⁹¹ The debate focused instead upon

⁹¹ Divine, 72-85.

the question of what the nature of the isolationist cast was to be. Traditional isolationism would have allowed arms exports to all belligerents⁹² while revisionist isolationism supported a rigid defensive perimeter behind which America would retreat from the evil aggressor who abroad.

C. THE NEUTRALITY ACTS, 1935-1937

Spurred by the impending release of a preliminary report to the Senate from the Nye committee, Roosevelt transformed a meeting with that committee into an opportunity to urge the Senate to study the whole issue of neutrality and prepare legislation supporting it. Although surprised by the President's move, the committee felt it held a mandate from the President to act, and began aggressively working on the subject. Divine suggests two possible reasons for the President's unprecedented suggestion. First, the issue provided a "red herring" by which somewhat embarrassing disclosures by the committee's chairman might be allayed, and secondly, Roosevelt may have used the committee's action on neutrality as a goad to overcome the State Department's procrastination on the same issue.⁹³

⁹² Traditional isolationism rigidly applied would have permitted munitions exports to all belligerents. It must be remembered that the pre-World War I foreign policy was theoretically based upon traditional isolationism, but the benevolent neutrality practiced by the Wilson administration in meeting the challenges of their time was traditional isolationism only by declaration -- the actual practice was closer to tacit alignment with the Entente powers.

⁹³ Divine, 85-90.

The move served the President well. Senator Nye stated, while revealing the committee's new responsibilities to a Lexington, Kentucky audience, that the President was determined to keep America out of the war at all costs.⁹⁴ Dissension within the Senate regarding the appropriate cognizance for neutrality legislation diluted the Nye Committee's efforts until April, when Senators Nye and B. C. Clark individually introduced resolutions in Congress to restrict U.S. citizens from traveling in war zones and to limit credit for the purchase of contraband goods by a belligerent government.

Secretary Hull and other presidential advisers in the State Department were wrestling unsuccessfully with developing a common statement regarding neutrality legislation. Hull opposed isolationist neutrality, and the department's constant delay in any cohesive stand regarding this issue is likely to be an indication of his efforts to dilute or destroy the neutrality proposals, without publicly opposing the President or the strong neutrality movement in Congress.

1. The Neutrality Act of 1935

Hitler's announcement of his intent to build a 550,000 man army in March, 1935 led Roosevelt to hope for an opportunity to cooperate with European democracies and press

⁹⁴ "President to Avoid Any War, Says Nye," New York Times, 31 March 1935, 26.

for disarmament. A meeting in Stresa between Britain, France, Italy, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia seemed to provide the occasion the President sought, but the inaction of the Stresa powers, and domestic American neutrality sentiment heightened by fears of a world war growing out of the worsening Italo-Ethiopian relations, effectively dashed the President's hopes and helped propel America towards the framing of the first Neutrality Law.⁹⁵ Roosevelt's efforts to mitigate the restrictiveness of legislated neutrality by pressing for a more flexible policy were lost when war erupted between Italy and Ethiopia in the fall.

The first Neutrality Law, signed in August, 1935, required an impartial embargo on arms to all belligerents, and prohibited American vessels from carrying any implements of war. It empowered the President to warn American citizens that travel on belligerent ships could be undertaken only at their own risk, and established federal control over import and export of armaments. The law drew heavily upon the findings of the Nye Committee, and addressed most of the issues which had seemed to draw the United States into the

⁹⁵ Robert Dallek, Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 104; and Adler, 170-171, both point to the deterioration of Italo-Ethiopian relations as the immediate cause of popular American pressures for neutrality policies, with subsequent German actions adding to the momentum of isolationist and neutralist movements later.

1917-1918 war.⁹⁶ The law aided Italy immensely more than it did Ethiopia, since Ethiopia had no power to affect shipping to Italy. American trade with Italy mounted to the point that Roosevelt and Hull asked American businesses to observe a "moral embargo" to cut back on Italy's access to oil and other commodities which, although not specifically restricted, were necessary for modern war.

2. The Neutrality Act of 1936

The first neutrality law was self-limited to six months, and its mandated demise brought about the second neutrality law in February, 1936. The administration's efforts to redefine its position on flexibility in a manner amenable to Congress died in committee, and in its place, Congress built the walls of isolationism even higher by extending the basic provisions of the first law, and adding two significant amendments to them. The first drew even more heavily on the Nye Committee's work and forbade the extension of loans to belligerent powers. The second amendment modified a clause in the 1935 act which allowed a degree of presidential discretion in extending an existing arms embargo to new belligerents if hostilities spread beyond their initial boundaries. The altered clause required the President to extend embargoes to all countries involved in a conflict, regardless of their previous status.⁹⁷ As the

⁹⁶ Adler, 173-174.

⁹⁷ Adler, 175.

European tensions were expanding to include more countries, Congress clearly sought to prevent the President from circumventing its stance on neutrality by providing support to France or Britain indirectly, through using a later entry into the fray as an intermediary.

3. The Neutrality Act of 1937

Isolationist sentiment in Congress did not weaken during the period in which the Neutrality Act of 1936 was in effect. Its successor, the permanent Neutrality Act of 1937, maintained the high walls of isolation already built, and added a parapet at the top. All principles of the previous laws were retained, plus the new law forbade the arming of American merchant ships, and empowered the President to place trade with belligerents in goods other than arms and implements of war on a cash-and-carry basis. Although the "cash-and-carry" principle held seeds which would be used later to make inroads into neutrality legislation, Congress had so obviously attempted to attend every factor which might have drawn the United States into World War I that the New York Herald-Tribune suggested as a title "Act to Preserve the United States From Intervention in the War of 1914-18."⁹⁸ The newly legislated neutrality of the United States underscored America's determination not to become involved in any international dispute. The automaticity of its tenets

⁹⁸ New York Herald-Tribune, cited by Gloria J. Barron, Leadership in Crisis: FDR and the Path to Intervention (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1973), 19.

guaranteed that, should Italy or Germany declare war against the League powers, the United States would accord the League exactly the same consideration it gave Hitler or Mussolini, and refuse assistance to international efforts to contain aggression, just as it refused assistance to the aggressors. Although an impartial arms embargo favored the fascist powers, whose military production outstripped that of the democracies, the "cash-and-carry" provisions of the act did tacitly assist the democratic powers. Since the Royal Navy largely controlled the sea lanes, Britain could intervene in Axis efforts to purchase important supplies from American businesses.

4. Asia and the Neutrality Act of 1937

The effects of the 1937 neutrality act in Eastern Asia were not as supportive of U.S. interests. When Sino-Japanese hostilities erupted in July, 1937, it became apparent that China, which was heavily dependent upon imported munitions, would be hindered by the American neutrality act, whereas Japan, which was largely self-sufficient in weapons but depended on unrestricted commodities, would benefit. The Roosevelt administration solved the quandary by temporizing. Despite heavy pressure from isolationists to effect the embargo, Roosevelt used the limited discretionary power the neutrality act had granted him--no declaration of war had been made by either of the belligerents, therefore it was left to the President to

decide when a condition of war existed which warranted invoking the tenets of the act. Roosevelt and Hull resisted isolationist insistence that they were nullifying the law, and placed the invocation of an embargo "on a 24-hour basis". Later the administration did partially succumb to isolationist pressures by prohibiting government-owned ships from transporting arms to either China or Japan, and declared that any merchant vessels flying the American flag would transport arms to the belligerents at their own risk. American munitions trade with China continued apace, albeit by a more circuitous route; American ships carried munitions bound for China to England, where the munitions were trans-shipped to British bottoms bound for Hong Kong.⁹⁹

Another area in which the administration demonstrated partiality towards China lay in the export of aircraft to Japan. Japanese air attacks on Chinese cities afforded Hull the opportunity to denounce the bombing of civilians, and to publicly express deep regret over issuing licenses for the exportation of airplanes to countries guilty of such atrocities. J. C. Green, who was in charge of issuing such licenses, conveyed the government position directly to aircraft manufacturers, who were dependent upon government contracts and complied with the new policy.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Divine, 207-210.

¹⁰⁰ "Third Annual Report of the National Munitions Control Board," House Document no. 92, 76th Congress, 1st sess. (Washington, 1939), 80; cited by Divine, 217.

The same tactic which enabled Roosevelt to avoid restrictions of the neutrality laws, however, worked against U.S. efforts regarding raw materials. Raw materials continued to be exported to Japan, largely as a consequence of the support given by the United States to international agreements. The Treaty of Commerce, signed and ratified in 1911, precluded enacting an embargo against a foreign power when no actual condition of war was recognized, unless six months notice was provided. Not until July, 1939 did Japan receive the requisite notice, which allowed it to continue importing American scrap iron and petroleum products until January, 1940.¹⁰¹

Circumventing the provisions of the neutrality laws enabled the Roosevelt administration to continue American support of China, mollify isolationists, and demonstrated the vacuity of laws which attempted to predetermine American policies in international relations. U.S. interests were more closely aligned with the Chinese, and the Japanese were most obviously the aggressors, but neutrality legislation took no account of these unforeseen factors. Instead, Congressional determination not to become involved in another war which did not directly and obviously affect American freedom, guided by lessons which were drawn from the previous world war and widely publicized by the Nye Committee, shaped

¹⁰¹ Bemis, 354-358.

neutrality legislation which was shortsighted, arbitrary, and failed to properly support American interests.

Shortly after he had successfully skirted the 1937 neutrality legislation, Roosevelt delivered the "quarantine speech," which suggested the United States adopt a more internationalist policy without specifically stating the means by which that policy would be implemented. Several writers, including Divine, Dalleck and Graebner suggest the President made the speech largely to test the national sentiment regarding isolationism, and that he found it vehemently so, compelling him to retreat from further internationalist endeavors. It might be argued instead that Roosevelt, encouraged by national acquiescence to his scheme for tacitly aligning American policy in the Far East with that of the League, sought to maintain cautious pressure against isolationists while his administration developed policies for making greater inroads into the isolationist camp. Whichever is the case, angry isolationist reaction drove him away from his efforts to increase American influence in world affairs.

D. MUNICH: WATERSHED OF ISOLATIONISM

The Czechoslovakia crisis of 1938 did little to convince Americans they should support Britain and France in any attempt to contain an expansionist German government. Americans generally believed Roosevelt had contributed to solving the crisis by pressing both Hitler and Italian leader

B. Mussolini to negotiate a peaceful settlement; Dalleck argues that the two fascist dictators viewed Roosevelt's efforts as gestures made by a powerless man, and that Hitler was encouraged to negotiate more by the belief that employing military force was unnecessary to gain the capitulation of France and Britain.¹⁰² Chamberlain's optimism that the Munich agreement and the subsequent declaration of friendship signed between Britain and Germany heralded a new era of peace did not take into account the appetites of Mussolini and Hitler, nor their willingness to suffer the indignant outcries of western democracies as German and Italian troops boundary stakes into previously sovereign territory.¹⁰³

1. Breaking the Grip of Isolationism

Following Munich, Roosevelt's administration increasingly focused on breaking the isolationist grip on foreign policy, and developing the military muscle which would give weight to an American role in international politics. In November, the President remarked,

When I write to foreign countries I must have something to back up my words. Had we this summer five thousand planes and the capacity immediately to produce ten thousand per year, even though I might have to ask Congress for authority to sell or lend them to the

¹⁰² Dalleck, 166.

¹⁰³ Gordon A. Craig, Europe Since 1914, 3d ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1972), 649-651.

countries in Europe, Hitler would not have dared to take the stand he did.¹⁰⁴

This remark illustrates three main themes which influence the Administration's policies following the Munich agreement. The first, and most evident, was the need for military power. The absence of such power relegated the U.S. position to advocacy of moral suasion to accomplish foreign policy objectives. Hitler and Mussolini had by this time proven the fallacy of such a position. Table 1 presents the expenditures of the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy during the period 1933-1938, expressed as percentage of each country's gross national product (GNP). The anemic level of American military expenditures during this period is clearly indicated, especially during the latter part of the period when the other countries have clearly begun preparations for war.

The second theme the comment illustrates is recognition that the U.S. might be required to support its own security by providing armaments to belligerents selectively, rather than impartially restricting, (or conversely, impartially providing) weapons to foreign powers. The magnitude of U.S. armaments provided to Britain and France during the first world war clearly held a precedent

¹⁰⁴ Quotation from Herman Oliphant, memo of White House meeting, 14 November 1938, cited in David Reynolds, The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-41: A Study in Competitive Co-operation (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 42.

for an impending second war, and Germany's newly won access to Austrian and Czechoslovakian manufacturing resources, with which it could further support its rearmament program, clearly exacerbated the imbalance. The level of support Germany and Italy were committing to military development was readily evident in publicly available sources at the time; Paul Studenski cites League of Nations Armaments Yearbook, and other open sources, in developing the statistics which are depicted in Table 1, below. Germany's accelerated rearmament in the latter part of the decade, feebly shadowed by that of Great Britain and France, stands in sharp contrast against the steadfastly minimal expenditures of the United States.

Rearmament efforts gained urgency from two considerations. The first, obviously, was the need to create a deterrent effect which Hitler would be required to take account, both for American security and for that of European countries threatened by Hitler's aggression. The second was to support, in a convoluted fashion, American neutrality. Changing the neutrality laws to favor one belligerent or the other, after the outbreak of war, would have been an decidedly unneutral act, a fact noted by W. J. Bryan during the pre-intervention period of the first war. Altering the law before hostilities, however, might still have maintained America's neutral posture, if the changes were made in the absence of specific circumstances which might cause such

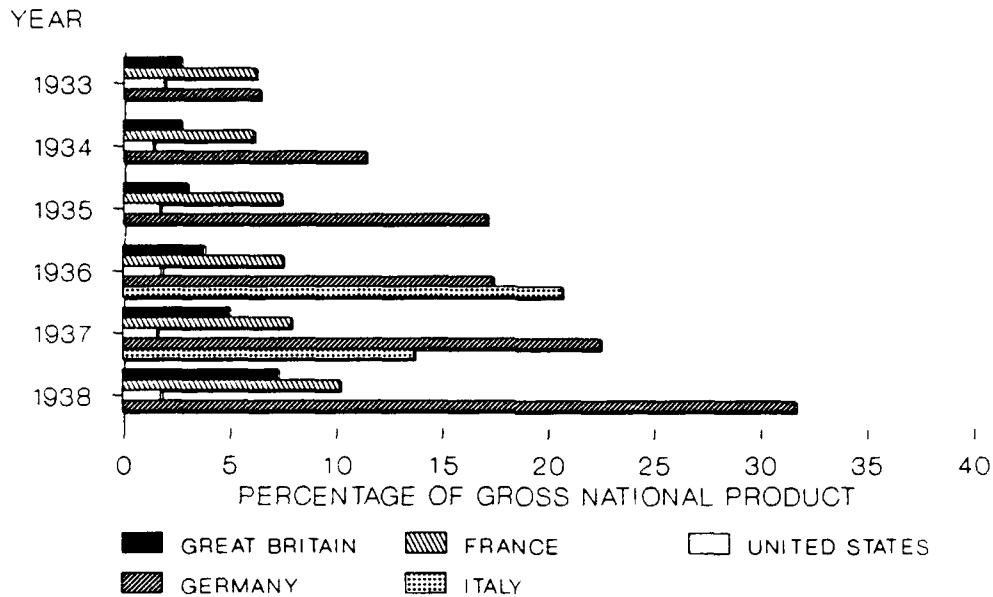
changes to favor one belligerent over the other.¹⁰⁵ In retrospect, the argument could be made that it really was immaterial whether U.S. neutrality laws favored Britain and France over Germany before, or after, September, 1939. At the time, however, neutrality was still a major issue with which lawmakers had to contend.

A third theme which Roosevelt's remark illustrates is the President's frustration with, and desire to increase, the level of American influence in international affairs. Any argument that U.S. influence aided in averting war by persuading Hitler to enter into international negotiations regarding his demands on the ill-fated Czech state is specious--Hitler had no reason to be concerned about the desires of an America whose most consistent foreign policy theme was non-involvement.¹⁰⁶ The German chancellor gained time in which to foment the fracturing of the Czechoslovakian

¹⁰⁵ Bemis, 364-366, argues that popular opinion was overwhelmingly sympathetic to the British and French cause, but equally as overwhelmingly in favor of neutrality during the period of 1938-1939.

¹⁰⁶ T. R. Fehrenbach, in FDR's Undeclared War, 1939 to 1941 (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1967), 23-24, states the broad outlines of American foreign policy in the 1930's were, "1. in the Orient, an undefinable generalization called the Open Door, which really meant the United States wanted no one power to dominate there and freeze the others out; 2. in the Western Hemisphere, and particularly the Caribbean, predominance, which F.D.R. continued but ameliorated by changing the Large Policy with its incessant Marine interventions into the Good Neighbor Policy which spawned a rash of dictators; 3. In Europe, nonintervention and neutrality, which, however, as all European chancellories were aware, did not exclude the continual giving of advice."

TABLE 1

ARMAMENT EXPENDITURES OF SELECTED COUNTRIES¹⁰⁷

state, and to further consolidate his gains in central Europe. Additionally, he gained the support of much of the German army leadership which, if on the verge of a coup d'etat prior to the occupation of Prague, certainly had no intention of doing so afterwards. The Munich capitulation did not avert war, it simply delayed it and made it even more unavoidable.

2. The Renewal of the Neutrality Debate

During the months which followed the Munich capitulation, Roosevelt's administration moved to introduce measures which would enable the United States to aid countries which opposed aggression. Measures favored by the

¹⁰⁷ Developed from statistics cited in Paul Studenski, "Armament Expenditures in Principal Countries," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 2:14 (Mar 1941): 30-31.

State Department included the repeal of the arms embargo (or, if dictated by political expediency, presidential discretion in the invocation of an arms embargo), and the adoption of the cash-and-carry formula for all exports, including arms, to belligerents. Roosevelt's address to the Congress on 04 January, 1939 specifically addressed the neutrality issue, saying,

At the very least, we can and should avoid any action, or any lack of action, which will encourage, assist, or build up an aggressor. We have learned that when we deliberately try to legislate neutrality, our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly--may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim. The instinct of self-preservation should warn us that we ought not to let that happen any more.¹⁰⁸

Ideology presented only part of the impetus which moved Roosevelt to press for means by which to make support available to Hitler's opponents. As he explained to a group of senators in January, 1939, technology and economic dependence had combined to place the Americas within Hitler's grasp, once his domination of Europe had been established.¹⁰⁹ If Hitler's actions following the Munich capitulation carried with them any clear message, it was that the German dictator's thirst for conquest would not be quenched. A. Frye supports Roosevelt's thesis with evidence that Hitler's

¹⁰⁸ Samuel Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York, 1938-50), vol. VIII, 1-3, cited in Divine, 234.

¹⁰⁹ Edward M. Bennett, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Search for Security (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1985), 158-159.

government was actively engaged in efforts to introduce the Nazi new world order into the Western Hemisphere well before war had broken out in Europe, and further argues that once Hitler had dominated Europe, he would have turned next to the resource-laden lands across the Atlantic.¹¹⁰

Herwig also presents a strong argument that the scope of Hitler's ambition was not bound by the European continent. Even as isolationists in America expressed concern that a misstep would ignite a confrontation between Nazi Germany and the United States, German navy planners had embarked upon a building program which called for the construction, completed by 1948, of a balanced modern navy. The plans included ten battleships, fifteen pocket battleships, four aircraft carriers, five heavy cruisers, forty-four light cruisers, sixty-eight destroyers, ninety torpedo boats, twenty-seven ocean-going submarines, and 222 U-boats. Later, in mid-1940, the plan was amended and expanded to more specifically adapt it to war against the United States.¹¹¹ Hitler recognized, according to Herwig's argument, the inevitability of war between the United States and Germany, and specifically included consideration for such a war in his planning. The incompatibility of Nazi Germany domination in Europe, and eventually in South America, with U.S. interests

¹¹⁰ Alton Frye, Nazi Germany and the American Hemisphere 1933-1941 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

¹¹¹ Herwig, 192-194.

made such a war pre-ordained. Yet isolationists in the United States continued to espouse the ideal of maintaining the United States in an insular position.

Hull emphasized the administration's concern over the potential magnitude of the coming war when he warned a group of senators, at a private meeting, that the coming conflict would not be "another goddam piddling dispute over a boundary line, but an assault on the peace of the world by powerful nations, armed to the teeth, preaching the doctrine of naked force and practicing a philosophy of barbarism."¹¹²

Additional motivation derived from the administration's knowledge of a possible pact between the Nazis and the Soviets. The Soviets had become frustrated with attempting to secure commitments from Britain and France regarding opposing a German adventure. Negotiations between a Stalin and British diplomats broke down over Stalin's insistence that occupying the Baltic states was essential for him to strengthen Soviet defenses against Germany, and while the Allies hesitated, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was consummated on 23 August, 1939. The pact, with its secret tenets assigning spheres of influence, alleviated Hitler's concerns about being countered by the Soviet divisions which faced him across Poland.

The changes to the Neutrality Act of 1937 which were recommended by the State Department would have conferred upon

¹¹² Adler, 210-211.

the President greater flexibility in imposing embargoes. Isolationist sentiment quickly flared against the proposed measures, and opponents to Roosevelt's efforts cited Switzerland, and other neutral European countries, as examples of governments who did not seek to intervene in external disputes, and still did not feel threatened. Senator R. A. Taft predicted that any war would be protracted, and if it did occur, combined allied might would "crush the Fascist upstarts." His solution was not to ease the conditions of American neutrality, but to ensure they were even more restrictive.¹¹³

During the six month American debate on neutrality, Hitler's occupation of Prague repudiated his claim that he intended only to annex those portions of Czechoslovakia which were predominantly German, Mussolini ordered the invasion of Albania, and Japan seized territory in the Western Pacific. The appearance of "Danzig" and "Polish corridor" in Nazi propaganda following the occupation of Czechoslovakia signalled the next morsel toward which the German government would turn its hunger. Discussion of the impending war dropped the term "if" and substituted in its place the definitive "when". Isolationists in Congress succeeded in blocking changes to the 1937 act, and when Congress adjourned on 05 August, Borah claimed he was convinced by better sources of information than the State Department that Europe

¹¹³ Adler, 210-212.

was in no danger of war. Roosevelt released Borah's statement, which helped discredit the extreme isolationists later in the year, while Hull ordered his staff to draw up proclamations and executive orders that would be needed when war erupted.

The difficulty in achieving domestic consensus for U.S. foreign policy is demonstrated by a poll taken by Fortune shortly after the war began. The Americans polled were all generally well-educated and well-informed leaders of business and industry. Within this group, eighty-three percent wanted the Allies to defeat Germany, but only twenty percent thought the United States should help by all means short of war, while only seventeen percent believed that America had a moral right to send become involved in the war. Strong public sentiment against American intervention, even as Europe entered into the convulsions of war, clearly precluded interventionists from exercising stronger leadership to bring American influence to bear.

3. The Neutrality Act of 1939

After he declared American neutrality, as required by the Neutrality Act of 1937, Roosevelt moved to strengthen the defense of the western hemisphere by creating, in concert with Latin America, a neutral zone extending 300 miles out to sea around the entire hemisphere, with the exception of European possessions and Canada. This zone was to be patrolled and enforced through mutual agreement by all the

American states, although the preponderance of naval power and long tradition of the Monroe Doctrine clearly established the United States as the primary sponsor of the zone.

Roosevelt's next move was to exploit the political ammunition Borah's ill-advised statement had provided as he called Congress into special session to demand repeal of the Neutrality Acts. The move was heartily opposed by the deeply-rooted Senate isolationists, who repeatedly cited the lessons of 1917 in emotional appeals for American neutrality. Fehrenbach discusses this debate and its foundation, and proposes that Roosevelt had three choices regarding the arms embargo repeal he sought. The first was to build a public consensus to pressure Congress; the second was to circumvent Congressional desires, if he could find a way; the third was to seek a compromise.¹¹⁴ According to Fehrenbach, Congress was, in 1939, a largely representative body which followed rather than created a national consensus and was therefore largely concerned with domestic, rather than international, politics. As the Fortune poll cited above indicated, Americans largely supported aid to the Allies, provided that aid stopped short of direct involvement in a war. The immediacy of the crisis robbed the President of the time necessary to develop the public consensus which would have been required, while public sentiment favoring neutrality clearly diminished the viability of circumvention as an

¹¹⁴ Fehrenbach, 38-41.

option. Roosevelt was therefore forced to accept the third option.

Roosevelt's compromise, the Neutrality Act of 1939, still largely aimed at repeating the lessons of World War I. Munitions could be sold to belligerents by American manufacturers, but only if title was transferred before the exports left the United States, and only foreign bottoms could carry war materiel to belligerents. Supporters of collective security and/or aiding the beleaguered democracies had long endorsed this clause as a means by which to oppose Hitler while maintaining a facade of neutrality-- Britain's command of the sea lanes made this tenet particularly supportive of the Allies. Additionally, as a result of the compromise, war zones were delineated around Europe, into which American ships or citizens were not to go on private business--there would be no recurrence of incidents like that of the Lusitania.¹¹⁵ On 04 November, 1939 the Neutrality Act of 1939 became law.

Alleviating the strictures of the previous neutrality act allowed a great deal of material assistance to Britain. Military aircraft ordered by Great Britain and France received priority over military orders from the U.S. government.¹¹⁶ Removing the encumbrances of neutrality on the

¹¹⁵ Robert A. Divine, The Reluctant Belligerent: American Entry Into World War II (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 69-73.

¹¹⁶ Bemis, 378-380.

export of aircraft allowed them to be flown under their own power by belligerent pilots originating in the United States, and by American pilots over belligerents' territory. U.S. government arsenals transferred rifles, machine guns, anti-aircraft guns, mortars, field pieces and divers other types of military equipment to private corporations, and thence to Britain. These, and many other clear demonstrations of support, aided British efforts to resist the Nazi onslaught.

As Hitler's drive into Poland spurred Congress into action to rethink neutrality legislation, the rapidity of his victory in western Europe similarly provided the needed stimulus for Congress to open the coffers and fund an aggressive rearmament program. In January, 1940 Roosevelt asked Congress to appropriate just under \$2 billion for defense, a small increase over the 1939 appropriations. Between January and May, Congress progressively whittled away at the amount requested. In mid-May, after Hitler's army had driven into Belgium, Roosevelt requested an additional \$1 billion for defense and before the end of the month both the Senate and the House had approved an amount which exceeded the request by \$500 million. Three weeks later Congress approved another \$1 billion, and by September, yet another \$5 billion. The new American attitude regarding U.S. responsibilities abroad found expression in the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, an organization which promoted American support to Britain and France at a grass-

roots level. As the war in Europe progressed, American popular opinion shifted to strongly support aid to the European democracies, but still strongly opposed direct involvement in the war.¹¹⁷

4. Defense of the Western Hemisphere

Bound by public sentiment to eschew involvement in Europe, administration efforts focused instead on the Americas. To counter Nazi infiltration in the Western Hemisphere, the United States used economic concessions and loans to offset the lures of Axis agents in Latin American countries. Using threats of Reich retaliation against countries which refused to do business, these agents were already writing purchase orders. The Act of Havana, adopted in July, 1940, provided for joint action in the event the "no-transfer" principle, which blocked transfer of New World colonies from one European power to another, became threatened as a result of Hitler's or Mussolini's conquest of a European country with New World possessions.

Concern for the security of the hemisphere also made the "destroyers for bases" deal concluded between the United States and Britain palatable to the American public. Political opposition initially precluded the Roosevelt administration from transferring U.S. warships to Britain. The conquest of France had given the German navy excellent ports from which to sally into the Atlantic, and by mid-1940

¹¹⁷ Divine, 1965, 84-86.

the British were in dire need of escort vessels. As Congressional approval was not likely to be forthcoming Roosevelt traded, in a move suggested by a group of New York lawyers, fifty overage destroyers to Britain in return for rent-free, ninety-nine year leases to air and naval bases in eight British possessions¹¹⁸--in return for slightly over a quarter of a million dollars, the United States had acquired bases from which to guard approaches to the United States and the Caribbean.

5. Lend-Lease

The end of 1940, however, brought an even more complete break with neutrality. Churchill conveyed to Roosevelt, in a letter delivered by seaplane to a cruiser on which the President was embarked, the gravity of the British plight. Staggered by losses to U-boats in the Atlantic, lacking the cash to pay for American orders on file, and desperate for aircraft, ships, and countless other categories of war materiel, the British Prime Minister petitioned Roosevelt for "an unexampled effort [on the part of the United States] believing that it can be made."¹¹⁹ Three days later Roosevelt used his famous "garden hose" analogy to illustrate his new concept, "Lend-Lease," to the United States.

¹¹⁸ Adler, 234-237.

¹¹⁹ Adler, 244-249.

The American public provided a powerful and overwhelmingly positive response to Roosevelt's Lend-Lease scheme, enough so that after three months of hearings and testimony, most efforts to amend the Lend-Lease bill were beaten away. Britain's plight regarding financial capital was so grievous that the British government undertook a monumental gamble; to better enable the Roosevelt administration to approach Congress on its behalf, the British treasury opened its records and provided a full disclosure of the state of Britain's finances.¹²⁰ The bill, and the \$7 billion required to fund it, were approved in March by both the House and the Senate by four-to-one and two-to-one margins, respectively. The extension of Lend-Lease to the Soviet Union after June enabled that country to make use of the "arsenal of democracy" as well.

Lend-Lease contributed an important step in American defense when it was adopted. It spurred a fledgling rearmament drive into full bloom as production of war material for export increased to meet Allied needs. American preparedness for war was still a major concern in 1941, and Overy and Wheatcroft state that it was caution born of fear

¹²⁰ William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Undeclared War 1940-1941 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1953), 213-289, provides a very thorough study of the Lend-Lease Bill, and the negotiations and hearings which preceded its acceptance. Reynolds, 145-168, discusses Lend-Lease from the British perspective, which provides an interesting interpretation of the issues from the perspective of the petitioner.

of war with Japan or Germany before U.S. defenses could be made ready which kept Roosevelt from embarking upon a more vigorous effort to aid the victims of aggression.¹²¹ Popular and Congressional opinion, also, had to be informed to support a concentrated war effort. The clearly indicated opposition, on both counts, to intervention in "another European war" mandated an overt act be committed by a hostile power before widespread support for U. S, entry into the war could coalesce. Entering the war under any other circumstances could have easily presented Roosevelt with a politically fractured and resentful country, within which isolationists, anti-New Dealers, and other political opponents could have been counted on to clamor for withdrawal from the war effort before victory had been achieved.

6. Maritime Defense

The issue of American convoys and escorts presented yet another arena in which isolationists and non-interventionists sought to prevent the United States from becoming involved in war with Germany. Roosevelt was forced to choose the more conservative of two strategic plans for defending the western hemisphere from Axis aggression partly due to political pressure from a joint resolution, introduced by Senator C. W. Tobey and Representative H. Sauthoff which would have prohibited the use of American merchant vessels to

¹²¹ Richard Overy and Andrew Wheatcroft, The Road to War: The Origins of World War II (New York: Random House, Inc., 1989), 288-290.

transport cargo to belligerents, and of American naval craft to escort them,¹²² and partly because, as Roosevelt himself acknowledged, to have ordered American vessels to conduct escort duties could have been tantamount to war.¹²³

The adopted plan, sagaciously labeled "Hemisphere Defense Plan 2," directed American escort vessels to assume that Axis ships in Western Hemisphere waters were motivated by possible "unfriendly interest," but authorized U.S. vessels only to follow Axis warships along shipping lanes, broadcast their positions to British ships, and generally render Axis operations hazardous within the boundaries of restrictive rules of engagement to preclude American vessels from firing the first shot. Additionally, the plan assumed that Axis vessels approaching within twenty-five miles of any British possession on which an American base had been established threatened the safety that base, and authorized the attack of such vessels if they failed to heed warnings to stand clear.¹²⁴

Another consideration which undoubtedly moved Roosevelt to select the more conservative patrol plan was the situation in the Pacific. The more aggressive plan would have required significant naval assets be transferred from

¹²² "Congress is Urged to Forbid Convoys," New York Times, 01 April 1941, 18.

¹²³ Reynolds, 198-200.

¹²⁴ Langer and Gleason, 440-449.

the Pacific fleet to the Atlantic fleet. The Russo-Japanese Non-aggression Pact, signed on 13 April, 1941, secured Japan's northern flank and freed that country's forces to conduct more aggressive activities southward. To have weakened American defense in the Pacific could easily have invited increased Japanese aggression in the western Pacific area.

Later, in September, 1941, an exchange of fire between a U-boat and a patrolling U.S. destroyer, the Greer, provided the opportunity and the motive to change the rules of engagement in the Atlantic from "trail and report" to "attack on sight." Referring to German naval units as "rattlesnakes of the Atlantic," Roosevelt ascribed to the Nazis the intent to abolish the freedom of the seas, and announced an undeclared war between the U.S. and German navies in the Atlantic. Although subsequent Senate inquiry revealed that the truth behind the action was less damning of the German submarine's intent than Roosevelt's account of it had led many to believe, popular opinion continued to support the "attack on sight" policy.¹²⁵

Events in the North Atlantic, such as the incident involving the Greer, or those involving the Kearney and the Reuben James--two other American destroyers suffering torpedo attacks by German submarines in which 11 and 115 American sailors were lost, respectively--provided the popular support

¹²⁵ Dallek, 290-294.

the Administration needed to push for, and receive, repeal of provisions of the Neutrality Act. The act had become moot at this point, and by securing the repeal of those provisions in the act which restricted the arming of merchant vessels, prohibited American vessels from entering belligerent ports, and required the President to establish combat zones around belligerent countries, the administration was freed to take actions in "defense of American rights."¹²⁶

This clearly marks a return to the pre-intervention period of 1914-1917, when "defense of American rights" demanded a declaration of war in retaliation for actions taken by Germany to mitigate the support the United States was providing Britain. That Roosevelt could not request an outright declaration of war is illustrated by the closeness of the vote regarding the repeal of the above-cited provisions of the Neutrality Act; in the Senate the vote was 50 to 37, in the House, it edged through by eighteen votes--212 to 194. The President could take actions, as commander-in-chief, which could be reasonably, (or in the case of the Greer, falsely) ascribed to defense of the hemisphere, but to ask for outright war at this time might have broken his tenuous control of the situation.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941 and Hitler's subsequent declaration of war on the United States in the same month were the overt acts needed to unify

¹²⁶ Reynolds, 214-216.

popular and Congressional opinion, and strike isolationism's shackles on the Roosevelt administration's actions.

"Europe's war" became, with the attack, America's war and few in America dared raise opposition to providing whatever means were necessary for the United States to defeat and chastise the aggressors. The very survival of the United States had become the stakes for which the war was being fought.

IV. THE COLD WAR

After the Second World War ended in August, 1945 a new world system emerged. Cooperation between the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union gradually eroded during the latter part of World War II, as the allies drove the German and Japanese armies back within the borders from where they had originated, and the last vestiges of cooperation shredded irretrievably over the issue of the occupation of Germany. The ensuing political dualism in Europe centered on the two countries which emerged from the war as pre-eminent powers. The sponsor of the democracies, the United States had maintained its industrial capacity intact, its productive population relatively whole and well-mobilized, and its economy sound through the blessing of geographic isolation,. The leading power among the communist governments, the Soviet Union, had seen significant portions of its industry destroyed, and had suffered starvation, catastrophic casualties, and near-defeat, but through coercive mobilization emerged from the war with the most powerful military force in Europe.

The conflict between the interests of the Western powers and those of the Soviet Union is the subject of extensive

historical analysis and theorizing.¹²⁷ A broad generalization points to the distrust with which each viewed the other as the taproot of the Cold War--Soviet leader J. Stalin repeatedly sought security cooperation with France and Britain before the war, and the lesson of the Munich appeasement helped convince him to direct his diplomatic efforts toward a pact with Nazi Germany. Similarly, Stalin chafed under the apparent reluctance of the Western powers to open the "second front" in France to draw off some of the Wehrmacht's power, which was inflicting massive casualties upon the Red Army. After the war, Stalin also expressed his view regarding the restoration of territory to governments of popular representation, saying,

This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise.¹²⁸

The urge to impress communist ideology and Soviet control upon occupied territories can be largely attributed to a combination of communist expansionism and Stalin's desire to

¹²⁷ Some sources which present good overviews of the origins of the Cold War are Joseph L. Nogee and Robert H. Donaldson, Soviet Foreign Policy Since World War II, 3d ed. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1988); Craig, Europe Since 1914, and John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Specific historic details regarding dates, locations, and historic figures are also derived from William L. Langer, ed., An Encyclopedia of World History, 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980).

¹²⁸ Milovan Djilas, Conversations With Stalin (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1962), 114.

maintain geographical buffers against the future invasion which Stalin expected to come from the West.

Aligned against the "communist bloc", as the group of Soviet-aligned governments came to be called, were the democracies of the West. The leading power among these democracies, the United States, had taken steps toward an isolationism-influenced foreign policy prior to the war's end. President F. D. Roosevelt stated at Yalta in February, 1945 that American troops would be withdrawn from Europe by two years after the war's end, and the rapid demobilization of the American armed forces following the war clearly supported that statement. Army manpower decreased from 8.02 million to 1.89 million within a year, the Navy's strength fell from 3.4 million to 1.6 million in six months, and the Army Air Force declined from 218 combat groups to only 109 in even less time.¹²⁹ As with a collapsing balloon, the rapidly deflating military structure did not assume any planned form--a report submitted during October, 1946 by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee stated that more than a year would be required to reconstitute a fraction of the U.S. military position which had been lost in the first month following the war. Estimates submitted during the following month by the European and Pacific theater commanders contained indications

¹²⁹ Figures cited by Samuel P. Huntington in The Common Defense: Strategic Programs in National Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 34-35.

that their troops were capable of achieving no more than fifty percent of their wartime combat efficiency.¹³⁰

This rapid demobilization clearly indicates an intent among American policy makers to return to America's traditional self-preoccupation. Popular sentiment and legislative pressure to "bring the boys home" after having won the war was an early manifestation of renascent isolationism which could easily have continued to develop to proportions similar to the inter-war period of 1919 to 1939. Even at this early and limited beginning, isolationist sentiment forced a divergence between U.S. foreign policy and the military policy which supported it. The Soviet Union exploited this divergence, and supported its own statecraft with the intimidation of military occupation of Europe. The Soviets backed their threats by massing forces in central Europe which outnumbered, by 1947, American forces twenty-fold. As one American military observer stated at the time, "All the Russians need to get to the Channel is shoes."¹³¹ The military demobilization of the United States seemed to indicate its own intent of returning to its own hemisphere once again, even at the risk of inviting an aggressively expansionist power to thrust into the vacuum left behind.

¹³⁰ Huntington, 33-36.

¹³¹ Theodore White, Fire in the Ashes: Europe in Mid-Century (New York: William Sloan Associates, 1953), 32.

A. THE POST-WAR DEMISE OF ISOLATIONISM

The importance of American involvement in Europe, especially as a counter to the post-war expansionism of the Soviet Union, was clear to numerous figures in the administrations of Presidents Roosevelt and H. S. Truman. Even as the democracies of the West undertook the challenge of rebuilding the devastation wrought in Europe by nearly six years of war, the Soviet Union sought to exploit the misery and suffering of war-ravaged peoples as fertile ground in which to sow the seeds of communist expansion. Estimates of Soviet intentions warned of a political power seeking to extend its influence over weakened neighbors through local communist parties. Secretary of State J. F. Byrnes and American Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. A. Harriman endorsed a firm approach against Soviet efforts to create an "establishment of totalitarianism, ending personal liberty and democracy" in the European countries which Soviet forces had "liberated" from the Germans.¹³² G. F. Kennan sought to warn policy-makers of possible consequences which a power vacuum in Europe would invite in relations with the Soviet Union. In a lengthy telegram sent from Moscow in 1946, Kennan said of the Soviet Union, and of the threat presented by them,

We have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with the United States there can be no permanent modus vivendi, that it is desirable and necessary

¹³² Huntington, 33-34.

that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure. This political force has complete power of disposition over the energies of one of the world's greatest peoples and the resources of the world's richest national territory The problem of how to cope with this force is undoubtedly the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced and probably the greatest it will ever have to face.¹³³

Roosevelt and Truman both expressed willingness to follow the suggested policy of resolution and strength. Early demonstrations of American resolve in the face of the Soviet political threat were made to indicate the U.S. intended to remain actively engaged in European security--the USS Missouri went to Turkey in 1946, and in 1947 the Truman Doctrine hurled a direct challenge to Communist opportunism, while the Marshall Plan proffered economic support with which European governments might develop sufficient political stability and economic recovery to frustrate communist efforts.

1. The Vandenberg Resolution

Events in Czechoslovakia during early 1948 further indicated that American involvement was essential for Europe to resist Communist coercion.¹³⁴ Fears that Italy, and

¹³³ George Kennan presented his views regarding the measures necessary to contain the Soviet Union in an article published under the nom de plume X, in Foreign Affairs, 25:4 (July 1947); 566-582. The quotation cited is from his telegram, cited by Lawrence S. Kaplan in NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), 22.

¹³⁴ James Reston, "Communist Acts Spur Congressional Action," New York Times, 27 Feb 1948, 14.

possibly Norway, would succumb as had Czechoslovakia lent impetus to considerations for international involvement, and helped convince Congress to pass the European Cooperation Administration bill. The Senate, however, sought to exercise its power to ensure American involvement in the affairs of Europe would be conducted under conditions which were acceptable to Congress. Chief among Senate efforts was the Vandenberg Resolution, which was passed by the Senate in mid-1948 and established stipulations on America's European policies. These conditions were generally aimed at directing such policies to be managed within the framework of the United Nations charter, and to be based on "regional and collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid." Although the Senate still harbored suspicions that America's European allies were too willing to allow the United States to assume Europe's rightful duty, and critical isolationist sentiment was voiced by Senators G. Malone and J. W. Fulbright, the resolution passed by a majority of 64 to 4.¹³⁵

The Vandenberg Resolution's intent was to preclude the United States from becoming ensnared in the role of a global policeman by requiring that it actively counter aggression only as a part of a multi-national effort. The concern was not without precedent, since other major powers in western Europe had, scarcely a decade previously, wrung

¹³⁵ Kaplan, 21-24.

their hands while Hitler won concessions through bluff and intimidation. Attaching this legislation to America's foreign policy, therefore, was an effort to share the onus of defending democracy with other members of an alliance in which the United States participated, equally as much as it sought to restrain unilateral policy adventures on America's part.

The issues addressed by the Vandenberg Resolution and the debate which swirled around it also represented the early stages of a debate over a matter which has been dubbed "burdensharing". Burdensharing refers to the equality of any single alliance member's contribution to an alliance, relative to the contributions provided by other members of the alliance. That no two members of an alliance would support the goals of the alliance with equal fervor is not a new concept, since Clausewitz referred directly to the issue when he wrote, "We never find that a State joining in the cause of another State takes it up with the same earnestness as its own."¹³⁶ The question of burdensharing which was confronted by the Vandenberg Resolution has provided the fuel for considerable debate regarding the U.S. contributions to forward defense arrangements, such as NATO, or Korea. In the years to follow, burdensharing became a mask for isolationist sentiments which argue for reduced commitments to mutual security organizations.

¹³⁶ Clausewitz, 399.

2. The North Atlantic Treaty

Decades of isolationist tradition conditioned the suspicions of the U.S. legislators. These suspicions, and the putative selfishness of the Europeans, are cited by L. S. Kaplan as major impediments to the negotiations which led to the North Atlantic Treaty on 09 April, 1949. The ratification of the treaty represented the first "entangling alliance" the United States had undertaken in peacetime, and many government officials were reluctant to take the step without altering the wording of the charter, particularly of article five, to provide the United States with sufficient political flexibility to protect its constitutional barriers to military commitments. The initial wording of article five called upon members of the alliance to assist other members being attacked by external enemies, with "such action as may be necessary [emphasis added]." U.S. ambassadors to the meetings considered this wording too restrictive for the United States to protect its political interests; the wording was subsequently changed to the more ambiguous and less restrictive call upon each member of the alliance to assist an attacked member with "such action as it deems necessary [emphasis added]." ¹³⁷

The ratification of the Atlantic treaty and the acceptance of the Vandenberg Resolution by the U.S. Senate demonstrate two points. First, the United States as a whole,

¹³⁷ Kaplan, 27-29.

and Congress as its representatives, had become generally aware of the degree to which American interests were tied to European security. Noted researcher of American isolationism L. N. Rieselbach presents evidence which suggests a linkage between the degree of isolationist ideology demonstrated by congressional representatives and that which was embraced by their constituents.¹³⁸ The existence of such a linkage further supports the argument that the U.S. populace had largely accepted the idea of the United States as a world power with responsibilities extending beyond its shores. The overwhelming margin by which the Senate endorsed the Vandenberg resolution seems to clearly indicate its decision to embark upon an internationalist course, albeit one with specified limitations. The large number of abstentions in the voting, however, also seems to indicate tacit opposition to the internationalist policies the resolution sought to shape.

The second point which the Atlantic Treaty illustrates, as does the Vandenberg Resolution, is that although the United States had broken with its traditional aversion to alliances with European countries, threads of isolationist sentiment were still woven through the fabric of American political thought. This is best illustrated by both the debate which arose over the specific wording of article five of the charter, and by the placing of conditions on

¹³⁸ Rieselbach, 158-180.

American involvement in Europe by the Vandenberg Resolution. The U.S. government entered into the North Atlantic alliance in the same manner as a man unable to swim would enter deep water--only out of necessity, with one eye on an accessible means by which to escape, and with a life preserver firmly attached. Recognition of the importance of Europe's political freedom to the interests of the United States could not completely overcome deeply rooted American skepticism regarding the intent of European capitals.

B. THE "GREAT DEBATE" OF 1951

The North Atlantic Treaty represented American willingness to defend Western Europe, but the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was the tangible commitment to that defense. This organization, with its American Supreme Allied Commander, concomitant staff, and associated support and decision-making bodies, created a U.S. presence in Europe to demonstrate this commitment and to physically deter communist aggression should the need arise. The American presence in Europe did not result without considerable debate. C. V. Crabb stated that bipartisanship was largely absent from American foreign policy during the period in which NATO was formed, resulting in truculent animosities between the Truman administration and its opponents and

between isolationist- and internationalist-minded members of each party.¹³⁹

NSC-68--shaped by the communist victory in China, guided by the Soviet Union's achievements with the atomic bomb, and adopted in 1950--endorsed massive rearmament as the surest means for deterring Soviet troops from overrunning Europe as early as 1952. Dissent within Truman's administration over the specific amount by which the U.S. defense budget should be raised to support NSC-68 had not been resolved when North Korean troops attacked South Korea on 25 June, 1950. The swift U.S. response to the attack calmed European doubts as to the veracity of American support in the face of communist aggression, but introduced new fears that America's focus would shift from Europe to the Far East.¹⁴⁰ As popular and official opinion in the United States largely ascribed control of both Red China and North Korea to the Soviet Union, however, concerns arose in the United States that the Korean conflict was merely a diversionary tactic by the Soviets, and American resolve to oppose the Soviets in Europe hardened further.

In light of the demonstrated propensity for American governments to integrate isolationism in U.S. foreign policy

¹³⁹ C. V. Crabb, Bipartisan Foreign Policy: Myth or Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), 86; cited by Phil Williams, The Senate and U.S. Troops in Europe (New York: St Martin's Press, 1985), 33.

¹⁴⁰ Kaplan, 43-44.

after crises, U.S. willingness to shoulder the burden of high levels of military-related expenditures, overseas commitments and defense build-up during this period might seem puzzling. The combined conditions inherent in the post-war world might serve to explain what would be an otherwise curiously high level of support shown by American public opinion for interventionist internationalism. First, the threat posed by the Soviet Union to "freedom and democracy" had been clearly demonstrated in the years following World War II, and the war in Korea seemed to verify a Soviet intent to dominate the world by whatever means were necessary. Second, the intervention in Korea was undertaken under the auspices of the United Nations, which showed the effectiveness of international security cooperation. Third, the war indicated the importance of America's leadership for the organization to effectively counter aggression. Had any of these three factors been absent, there might have emerged from this period a much different level of support for interventionist internationalism.

Although America's hardened resolve to oppose communist expansion contributed to Truman's decision to augment Western Europe's defenses with American troops, the Korean conflict was being fought in the absence of a declared war (and was not faring well at the time). This provided a ready-made analogy for critics of the President's decision to place troops in Europe--if Truman's interventionist policies were

failing in Asia, why should they succeed in Europe? Former president H. H. Hoover publicly broadcast, on 20 December, a call for Truman to abandon his failing policies and "preserve for the world this Western Hemisphere, Gibraltar of Western Civilisation", and to place "the prime obligation of the defense of Western Continental Europe . . . upon the nations of Europe."¹⁴¹ Against the backdrop of war in the East, therefore, the question of defending the West achieved even greater significance. Forward defense was being challenged, and isolationism was again finding its way into foreign policy discussions.

1. Presidential Power Aspects of the Debate

Hoover's position did not call for the total abandonment of Europe, but possibly defined the most isolationist position of the period. The 1951 debate regarding American troop commitments in Europe is believed by some to actually have been a bifurcated disagreement, consisting of the separate issues of Constitutionally-derived presidential powers, and national interests. P. Williams supports this theory with evidence which indicates one portion of the disagreement--what was to become the major opposition to Truman's European troop decision--was grounded in a conflict between the Truman administration and Congress over the nature and extent of Truman's powers as Commander in

¹⁴¹ N. A. Graebner, ed., Ideas and Diplomacy (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 742-745; cited by Williams, 47-49.

Chief of the armed forces. W. Lippman stated during the debates,

Mister Truman's troubles with Congress are self-induced. The whole question of his rights and powers would never have been raised had he exercised his rights and powers with tact, with discretion, and with a broader understanding of what is involved.¹⁴²

Had Truman been more forthcoming in providing specifics regarding the size of the troop commitment and its integration into European defense as a whole, this argument suggests, much of the debate which took place during January, 1951 might have been forestalled.¹⁴³ This argument implies Senate acceptance of interventionist policy was a given factor, and that the issue's focus was Truman's skill at developing political consensus.

2. National Interest Aspects of the Debate

The second part of the Senate opposition to Truman's European troop decision involved the broader issue of the nature of American foreign policy, and its commitment to Europe. Senator R. Taft, an opponent of Truman's decision, opposed maintaining a large number of U.S. forces in Europe due to the deleterious effects which he believed a consistently high level of defense expenditure would have upon American society. Taft was not not an isolationist; he advocated an expanded air force, an army capable of

¹⁴² W. Lippman, "Mr. Truman and the Constitution," reproduced in Congressional Record 16 January 1951, 313-314; cited by Williams, 49.

¹⁴³ Williams, 48-52.

occasional extensions of action into Europe or Asia if necessary, and a strictly limited number of troops stationed in Europe to meet the expectations which had been raised among the allies regarding American support.¹⁴⁴ Beyond these limitations, however, the issue of troop deployments caused heated debate.

A major portion of the "national interest" argument against American troops being stationed in Europe rested on the size and length which the American troop commitment was to assume. Secretary of State D. Acheson testified, during Senate hearings on the North Atlantic Treaty, that the United States would not "be expected to send substantial numbers of troops [to Europe] as a more or less permanent contribution to the development of [Western Europe's] capacity to resist [communist aggression]."¹⁴⁵ Despite this reassurance, scarcely three years had passed before the deployment of troops and the creation of an organizational structure to support the military aspects of the alliance portended America's commitment to directly guaranteeing Europe's defense. Given the perceived nature of the communist threat throughout the postwar world, U.S. involvement in the affairs

¹⁴⁴ Robert Taft, A Foreign Policy for Americans (New York: Doubleday, 1951); and Congressional Record 05 January 1951, 59-60; are presented by Williams to support his argument for the rationale and tenets of Taft's foreign policy position, 54-55.

¹⁴⁵ Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), 285.

of Europe could have been restrained only with difficulty during this period. In the words of D. P. Calleo,

Taft's situation reflects that of many American conservatives throughout the postwar era. Their fierce ideological hatred of Soviet communism . . . led them to support policies that had the domestic effects they most feared. The reasons . . . lay not only in . . . passionate anticommunism but also in the weakness of a world, Europe above all, that called out for American hegemony. Like Britain's power in the nineteenth century, America's strength was irresistibly drawn into a global vacuum.¹⁴⁶

The U.S. nuclear monopoly was arguably a contributing factor which led to the decision to deploy American troops to Europe. That monopoly represented a comfortable means for providing a protectorate for Western Europe, and possibly encouraged the Truman administration to accept America's postwar role of military guarantor of freedom. The Korean conflict demonstrated the vacuity of the nuclear promise, when political constraints and a dearth of appropriate targets precluded the exploitation of America's technological advantage.¹⁴⁷ The impermanence of the nuclear monopoly was demonstrated in 1949, when the Soviet Union established itself as a nuclear power. The die, however, had been cast

¹⁴⁶ David P. Calleo, Beyond American Hegemony: The Future of the Western Alliance (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987), 38.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Carver, "Conventional Warfare in the Nuclear Age," in Makers of Modern Strategy From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 779-783; also, Morton H. Halpern presents an interesting discussion of factors which mitigated the U.S. nuclear capabilities in "The Limiting Process in the Korean War," in American Defense Policy in Perspective, ed. Raymond G. O'Connor (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965), 314-323.

and the United States could not easily abandon its allies.¹⁴⁸ Troop deployments, first as part of a "trip wire" to connect the boundaries between the Eastern and Western blocs to American strategic arsenals, and later to maintain a forward defense against a Warsaw Pact military adventure, became an inexorable next step in America's decision to establish its forward line of defense in Western Europe and Korea.

Intra-alliance security concerns demanded an American military presence in Europe also. Only the rearmament of Germany could, during the first half of the 1950's, provide manpower which was necessary to establish a credible defense in central Europe. This rearmament was fraught with difficulty on at least two counts. First, it required the reintroduction of former Wehrmacht troops into armed service, a proposition which sobered many in whom the memory of the Second World War was still fresh. Only the admission of these troops developed a sufficient pool of manpower, and provided an essential source of military experience, upon which to build a new army.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Gaddis, 127-163, discusses the hardening of American resolution regarding Europe's defense, and the increasing reliance upon nuclear weapons to economically provide the deterrent effect the United States needed for the defense of Europe.

¹⁴⁹ A thorough discussion of the soul-searching which the German army and society underwent as the Bundeswehr rose from the ashes of the Wehrmacht is presented by Donald Abenheim in Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Another issue which opposed the forming of the Bundeswehr concerned agreements between the wartime allies which expressly prohibited German rearmament. Soviet opposition was not critical to the procedure, since it was to counter Soviet aggression that the German army was reborn. Among the European allies, however, the issue was more important. France, notably, was predominant in its concern for sharing the European continent with a re-militarized Germany, but the countries of the Brussels Pact of March, 1948, as a whole, recognized the linkage between economic recovery and the political confidence provided by military security.¹⁵⁰ Against this backdrop the participation of the United States in a European alliance understandably became essential to the peace of mind of the Western Europeans; the Europeans' experience with alliances against aggression during the late 1930's had demonstrated the importance of solidly based alliances for countering aggression. The "Great Debate" of 1951 provided the opportunity for American foreign policy to be debated on the Senate floor, with at least some of the tangible costs of an internationalist policy evident. A majority in the Senate accepted Truman's decision to deploy significant numbers of U.S. troops to

¹⁵⁰ Kaplan, 16-25, discusses the origins of the North Atlantic Treaty and the political maneuvering between the West European governments (primarily France and Britain) and the U.S. government regarding American involvement in European defense.

Europe in support of an interventionist policy, and through that acceptance set the stage for the following decade.

C. THE MANSFIELD INITIATIVES

The intensity of the Senate debate during the first four months of 1951 was followed by nearly a decade of general American acquiescence to administration policies towards NATO. Domestic support for, or at least acceptance of, the military alliance was widespread, as was acceptance of the threat which the alliance had been formed to counter. Most criticisms levelled at President D. D. Eisenhower during the last half of the 1950's dwelt upon suggestions that his administration was too soft on communism, and that his economically-oriented military policy, the "New Look", was insufficient in its support of air power, strategic nuclear forces, conventional strength, or some combination of the three. Williams suggests an absence of isolationist leadership during this period contributed to this lack of opposition to the Eisenhower Administration's military policies. Isolated critics of America's NATO commitment and the concurrent military assistance program, such as Senator A. Ellender, still embraced the belief that Europeans were irresponsibly neglecting their own defense. These critics urged the Administration to hew to a more conservative approach to providing military support for the allies and to

exert greater pressure on the Europeans to contribute to their own defense.¹⁵¹

Critics of internationalist policies initially lacked significant influence in the United States, but increasing support developed from economic concerns and from a natural extension of those concerns--the nagging suspicion that the Europeans were enjoying a free ride at America's expense. America's post-war economic decline and balance-of-payments deficit led eventually to the fall of the Bretton Woods system, and to the decision by the administration of President R. M. Nixon in 1971 to abandon the gold standard and devalue the dollar.¹⁵² The sagging of the U.S. economy relative to the economies of Europe unavoidably enhanced the perception of Europe's prosperity being derived from America's willingness to shoulder the burden of high defense expenditures.

These concerns began to surface with regularity during the mid-1960's and early-1970's, as Senator M. Mansfield began what became annual rituals of introducing resolutions or amendments which called for reduced troop levels in Europe. Although he was to become widely known for his efforts to reduce U.S. troop levels in Europe, Mansfield was

¹⁵¹ Williams, 112-118.

¹⁵² Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (New York: Random House, 1989), 313-443, discusses the post-war shift of economic power away from the United States, the factors which caused it, and its political and social implications.

a committed internationalist--he had strongly supported ratification of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1948, and held fairly conventional views of the Soviet Union and the threat it presented. Increasingly, Mansfield began to express the belief that American resources and influence were finite and should not be expended unless specific objectives could be achieved. His view was that America's role in the defense of free democracies should be limited to providing assistance where "the people and governments most directly involved are alive to the meaning and obligations of freedom and will shoulder these obligations if given a helping hand", and that a re-evaluation of U.S. goals in European defense should be undertaken.¹⁵³

The first resolution introduced by Mansfield was aimed simply at reducing the number of American troops in Europe. The nonbinding resolution evolved from a report submitted by Senator S. Symington in April, 1966 which was critical of the attitudes and policies of the European allies.¹⁵⁴ The timing of the resolution also suggests that de Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from the military organization of NATO lent impetus to Mansfield's efforts by contributing to the

¹⁵³ Mansfield's position regarding the American commitment to European defense is discussed by Williams, 119-209. Quote contained in M. Mansfield, The Foreign Policy of the United States, speech before the American Bar Association, Butte, Montana, June, 1941, 4; quoted by Williams, 125.

¹⁵⁴ M. Jewell, Senatorial Politics and Foreign Policy (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 35.

sentiment that Europe was unduly benefitting from an inequitable arrangement. This first resolution failed as a result of an alliance agreement which led to a reduction of approximately 35,000 U.S. troops in Europe.

Subsequent resolutions and amendments which were intended to bring about reductions in troop levels came to naught as well, although for differing reasons. Symington introduced the next challenge to America's force levels in 1968, when he introduced an amendment to the 1969 defense procurement bill which would have prohibited the use of funds after 31 December, 1968 to support more than 50,000 members of the U.S. armed forces in Europe. This amendment suffered from inopportune timing, as the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union militated against reducing NATO readiness. The next resolution, in 1969, was subsumed by a reappraisal of American foreign policy commitments which the administration of President R. M. Nixon had undertaken on its own initiative. Mansfield stated his position regarding the administration's initiative when he expressed his astonishment that,

the 250 million people of Western Europe, with tremendous industrial resources and long military experience, [were] unable to organise an effective military coalition to defend themselves against 200 million Russians who are contending at the same time with 800 million Chinese, but must continue after 20 years to depend upon 200 million Americans for their defence.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ M. Mansfield, Congressional Record 23 January 1970, S430.

The Nixon administration announcement, at the end of 1970, of its support for the status quo in Europe's defense structure intensified Mansfield's efforts, and in May, 1971 Mansfield introduced legislation to bind the Administration to a fifty percent reduction by the end of 1971. The momentum of Mansfield's effort evaporated rapidly when Soviet President L. Brezhnev issued an encouraging statement regarding the possibility of mutual troop reductions during a speech to the 24th Party Congress in March, 1971. A 1973 effort to achieve the same amount of troop reductions as the May, 1971 legislation also fell victim to hopes that mutual force reduction agreements were in the offing, although a narrow Senate vote on the 1973 amendment represented the greatest degree of support shown for Mansfield's troop withdrawal efforts.¹⁵⁶

The impact of U.S. involvement in Vietnam during this period must also be acknowledged. The conflict in Southeast Asia represents the highwater mark for interventionist internationalism, and represents an important turning point

¹⁵⁶ Williams, 184-225; and Kaplan, 130-132, 140, discuss the Senatorial efforts to achieve troop withdrawals. Williams focuses primarily upon the legislative politics and domestic pressures which shaped the battle, while Kaplan presents the debate in an intra-Alliance framework. Both agree that the 1973 effort represents the most unified effort by the Senate to reduce American forces in Europe, although Kaplan explains the subsequent reduction in support for troop withdrawal as being tied more closely to the improvement of detente than to the need to maintain U.S. troops in Europe to serve as 'bargaining chips' with which obtain favorable troop reduction agreements from the Soviets.

for interventionist policy. U.S. defense expenditures during the Vietnam era of 1965 to 1973 climbed significantly as America's military policy was shaped to support a foreign policy which had as its goal countering Soviet adventurism globally--the more passive policies of containment and massive retaliation were abandoned in favor of a two and one-half military with counterinsurgency and unconventional warfare capabilities.¹⁵⁷

Even as the costs of interventionist foreign policies grew, domestic support for American involvement in Vietnam declined. A vociferous and articulate public developed a deep antipathy towards any commitment of American troops in the "Third World", while the elected representatives of that public blocked antiballistic missile development, cut funds for conventional forces and weaponry, and balked at funding new strategic systems to replace ageing bombers and ballistic missiles.¹⁵⁸ Faced with domestic friction against military rearmament, burdensharing held the potential by which American internationalism might be shored up through increased contributions from its alliance partners, while better East-West relations, embodied in detente, offered the possibility that lower levels of defense expenditure would

¹⁵⁷ Joseph C. Rallo, Defending Europe in the 1990s (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 4-6 discusses the Vietnam conflict and its effect on American policy towards the defense of Europe.

¹⁵⁸ Calleo, 55-58.

suffice to sustain at least some level of overall parity with the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁹

The combination of detente and America's continued commitment to Europe presented an ever-widening chasm, however. As relations warmed between the Europeans on both sides of the iron curtain, it became apparent that U.S. influence in Europe was declining, while its military commitment was not. Detente was not divisible, much to the consternation of the United States, and the efforts of each European member of NATO to establish its own, individual relationship with East European countries contributed to America's resentment with its allies. A distinct possibility existed for isolationism to once again influence U.S. foreign policy, until Soviet aggression in Afghanistan ushered in the decade of the eighties, and two generally successful American interventions occurred--in Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989. The Afghanistan invasion served notice that the Soviet Union was no less of an "evil empire" than it had ever been, and that American military power was still important to countering communist aggression. The Grenada invasion taught the same lesson, and together with the American intervention in Panama instilled a new confidence in the U.S. military. Confidence in one's military is a factor which is necessary

¹⁵⁹ Calleo, 54-60, strongly supports the argument that the Nixon-Kissinger foreign policy objective during this time was to maintain American hegemony in Europe while seeking better relations with the Soviet Union.

to exercise internationalism in foreign policy, for if there is lack of confidence in the military underpinnings of foreign policy, then that policy relies upon either moral suasion, or bluff. The efficacy of the former was demonstrated in 1938. The danger of the latter is that moral suasion can be too easily ignored by ruthless governments, and that bluff, once discovered, is difficult to attempt again.

It would have been difficult to state, in 1985, that the accession of M. S. Gorbachev to the head of the Soviet Union would have had profound implications for U.S. foreign policy. Changes which were unleashed in the Soviet Union have spread throughout the communist bloc, and while the final form of the new world order has yet to be defined, it is even now imposing change upon American foreign policy.

D. THE SOVIET/WTO THREAT AND THE RELEVANCE OF NATO

1. The Demise of the Threat

The structure of communism in Europe is crumbling. Human desires for freedom and national identity have devoured the steel and concrete symbol of the cold war as surely as have the hammers and chisels which converted portions of the Berlin Wall into souvenirs and curios. The past two years have seen totalitarian governments, which were pledged to the advancement of socialism, being displaced by governments which allow multiple political parties and free elections. Internal crises caused by nationalist identities demanding

recognition, and by citizens demanding an end to economic chaos, have rendered the Soviet Union's leadership of communist Europe ineffective, at best.¹⁶⁰

The communist bloc formerly was militarily represented by the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), and much of the difference between European and American contributions to the defense of Europe was a natural extension of the disparate European and American perceptions of the threat presented by the WTO and its guiding power, the Soviet Union. Kaplan speaks of this divergence of views, and presents it as an explanation for many of the fissures in the Atlantic Alliance, including the contrast in military expenditures for defense, the variance in perspective regarding detente and its benefits, and other facets of political and economic relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁶¹

The gathering collapse of the Soviet economy, the defection of East European governments from the communist camp, and the probable inability of the Soviets to unite the WTO sufficiently to form a threat to the democracies of the West have given rise to the popular belief that the Cold War is now over, and Democracy has won. Surveys taken by the

¹⁶⁰ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Post-communist Nationalism," in Foreign Affairs 68:4 (Winter 1989/90): 1-25.

¹⁶¹ Kaplan, 115-184, presents an excellent discussion of the NATO alliance and of the issues which have created tensions among its members from the 1970's through the mid-1980's. Although it is predominantly from the American viewpoint, his book contains elements of both U.S. and European perspectives.

Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in 1974, 1978, and 1982 indicated an overwhelming majority of popular support to maintain the U.S. commitment to NATO at the levels which existed at the time of the polls. These attitudes corresponded with the generally unfavorable public perception of the Soviet Union, and the high level of support popular opinion evinced for U.S. intervention if Soviet troops invaded Western Europe. W. Schneider discusses these opinion surveys, and the relatively more internationalist/interventionist position taken by presidential administrations compared to public opinions.¹⁶² The surveys cited generally indicate a high degree of popular adherence to conventional opinions regarding the Soviet Union and the syllogism of NATO--the Soviet Union threatens the democracies of Europe, defending Western Europe supports the interests of the United States, therefore an American presence in Europe is necessary to counter Soviet threats to the interests of the United States. The changing situation in Europe is now bringing the validity of that syllogism under fire.

The military capabilities of the WTO are declining. East Germany was, until recently, the mainstay of non-Soviet support in the WTO, yet for the Soviet bloc it has simply

¹⁶² William Schneider, "Peace and Strength: American Public Opinion on National Security," in The Public and atlantic Defense ed. Gregory Flynn and Hans Rattinger (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, Publishers, 1985), 321-364.

ceased to exist as it unashamedly rushed out of the communist alliance to unite with West Germany. Soviet forces are, or will be, withdrawing from what is now the eastern part of Germany, as well as from other European countries, at the behest of the Soviets' erstwhile allies, who are conducting their own force drawdowns; in January, 1990 Colonel-General N. Chervov, a Soviet policy spokesman for the WTO, announced the imminent disbanding of the WTO's supreme political body.¹⁶³ The declining cohesion of the WTO, coupled with the reduced military strength of its members, appears to substantially mitigate the likelihood of a military assault being launched across the countries of Eastern Europe by the Soviets and by Soviet-directed forces.

The popular American perception of this reduced likelihood is reflected by a recent CBS News/New York Times survey. In May, 1990, only thirty-three percent of U.S. adults polled agreed with the statement that the Soviet Union's goal was world domination, compared to an eighty-one percent agreement expressed by polled adults in 1950. The survey results further indicated higher education and greater attentiveness to world events contributed to a more favorable opinion of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁴ Legislators also point to the communist bloc's degeneration as evidence that the threat to

¹⁶³ The Economist, "The Warsaw Pact -- Vanishing," 314:7639 (27 January 1990): 54.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Oreskes, "American Fear of Soviets Declines, Survey Finds," New York Times, 30 May 1990, A12.

Western interests do not merit the same levels of economic or political expenditure which they previously did. The changed threat to American interests abroad compelled Senate Armed Forces Committee chairman S. Nunn, in an address to the Senate, to urge the administration of President G. Bush to begin plans to reduce the American troop strength in Europe to a level between 75,000 to 100,000 within five years.¹⁶⁵

2. The Economic Relevance of NATO

Some arguments for reducing the U.S. contribution to NATO focus largely upon economic interests, and these arguments are commonly couched in references to burdensharing. According to burdensharing arguments America contributes excessively, relative to its European allies, to the defense of Europe, whereas the European members of NATO are too willing to enjoy a "free ride" and allow the United States to shoulder the majority of the economic burden for Western Europe's defense. Data is available which supports this contention--a report submitted by the Defense Burdensharing Panel of the House Committee on Armed Services cites figures which show U.S. expenditures on defense, stated as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), to be more than twice that of the average for the non-U.S. NATO members, a condition which has existed almost without exception for

¹⁶⁵ Congress, Senate, Senator Nunn, 101st Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record (19 April 1990), vol. 136, pt. 43, S4451-S4452.

every year since 1950.¹⁶⁶ Even considering that the entire U.S. defense budget does not directly contribute to NATO, the presence of expensive, strategically-oriented items in the defense budget, such as the B-2 bomber, the rail-mobile ICBM, and the Trident submarine, which are justified in terms of deterring Soviet aggression in Europe, cannot avoid increasing popular misconceptions about the U.S. contribution to Europe's freedom.

Pressures for unilateral force reductions have as their wellspring perceptions of excessive American efforts to defend Europe while the European NATO members enjoy social and economic gains which small defense expenditures make possible. Congressional efforts to reconcile American interests with force reduction pressures have recently taken, in response to the pressures which have resulted from those perceptions, the form of amendments which attempt to more equitably divide the costs and responsibilities associated with Europe's defense. Chief among these is an amendment which would respond to force reductions undertaken by the European NATO members with commensurate reductions of U.S. forces.¹⁶⁷ The message is elementary to the argument of burdensharing--it is increasingly difficult for the U.S.

¹⁶⁶ Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Report of the Defense Burdensharing Panel, 100th Cong., 2d Sess., 1988, committee print 23, 21-23.

¹⁶⁷ Congress, Senate, Senator McCain, 101st Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record (18 June 1990), vol. 136, pt. 105, S9118-S9119.

government to justify to its populace a U.S. commitment to provide higher levels of security for its European allies than they are willing to provide for themselves.

The popular conviction that the Eastern bloc no longer poses a serious threat to the West, making reductions in American defence spending possible is responsible also for the popular concept of the "peace dividend". Congressional resolutions and amendments have been forwarded which encourage this perception by calling for laudable uses for funds diverted from defense spending; tax reduction proposals, social welfare programs, deficit reduction measures, and prison reform proposals are but a few of the areas which would directly benefit from reduced defense spending, according to these legislative actions.¹⁶⁸ To an American populace which has been conditioned to the Soviet Union as the pre-eminent threat to American interests, the siren's song of the peace dividend is completely logical. The Soviet leadership is at the helm of a country which, beyond its nuclear capabilities, increasingly loses credibility as a threat to democracy as its economy grinds

¹⁶⁸ Congress, Senate, Senator Packard, 101st Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record, (21 March 1990), vol. 136, pt. 31, H959; and Congress, Senate, Senator Lagomarsio, 101st Cong., 2d sess., Congressional Record, (24 April 1990), vol. 136, pt. 46, S51231 and (27 April 1990), vol. 136, pt. 49, S5205. These citations represent only a brief survey of Congressional initiatives for distributing the fruits of the "peace dividend" to worthy causes. Many more are available, but to include them here would not necessarily contribute to the argument.

slower each day and its fractious republics openly chafe against the tenuous reins of control still held by the Kremlin. Now that the Russian bear seems to have no teeth, why spend the same amount of money to defend against it as was spent when it was thought to be fierce and omnipotent?

3. The Military Relevance of NATO

The apparent demise of the Soviet bloc as a clearly defined threat, however, has led to another, less obvious threat. D. Abshire referred to this threat when he stated,

We must realize that the forces of instability in Eastern Europe that led to World War I are once again at work. Our military strategy which today is designed to counter a Red army blitzkrieg through the Fulda Gap, must in the future ensure that history does not pick up where it left off in 1914 NATO is not obsolete but must take on the new mission of maintaining both stability and democratization in Eastern Europe.¹⁶⁹

The danger is historically unique--no nuclear-armed superpower has been threatened with collapse or civil war before. Rampant nationalism has already caused significant fighting within the Soviet Union, and Abshire's statement reflects the well-founded caution with which students of European history should approach any breakdown of long-standing political establishments in the Baltic and East European region. This caution notwithstanding, opponents of American involvement in Europe focus primarily upon the reduced danger of military aggression posed by the political

¹⁶⁹ David Abshire, "Strategy in a Changing World," printed in Congressional Record, (06 February 1990), vol. 136, pt. 9, S926-S927.

divergence within the WTO in arguments for reducing the American presence in NATO.

Contradictions between the estimates of Soviet capabilities forwarded by the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Intelligence Agency increase the difficulty of defining the true threat posed by the Soviet bloc. Added to these contradictions is an unbalanced American media focus--during the same period in which Gorbachev's promised reductions in military expenditures and willingness to negotiate further reductions have been highly publicized, the Soviet Union still out-produced NATO two-fold in tanks, and ten-fold in artillery shells, while maintaining and modernizing its weapons stockpiles in Europe.¹⁷⁰ Uncertainty within the American government regarding the threat which NATO faces in Europe cannot resolve a similar uncertainty among America's population, nor can it adequately refute arguments which question the validity of the threat which is used to justify a large U.S. presence in Europe.

Another argument against the military relevance of NATO is based upon the limited cooperation achieved within NATO in dealing with out-of-area problems, the most apparent of which is the Persian Gulf crisis. The NATO charter does not allow for operations out of the defined NATO area, which relegates NATO to the role of being a conveniently available

¹⁷⁰ International Security Council, "Bring on the B-Team," New York Times, 18 July 1990, A15.

vehicle for consultations amongst long-standing allies when out-of-area problems are addressed. As a result of the qualifications placed upon the alliance, military cooperation among the NATO allies in out-of-area conflicts have required either unilateral contributions from European countries, or coordination within frameworks other than NATO.¹⁷¹ The leadership of the United States, combined with its mobile and highly developed armed forces, serves to place America in the position of forging ahead to protect interests which are common to its allies as well as itself, and attempting to develop international support for its actions enroute. In the case of the Persian Gulf, this procedure has created the very real possibility that, unless the events which follow American intervention against Iraq's aggressive expansionism are conducive to positive perceptions of America's allies by the American populace, a severe backlash of isolationist influence on American foreign policy may result.

¹⁷¹ Alan Riding, "NATO Struggling to Redefine Itself," New York Times, 24 September 1990, A5. The Western European Union is one European structure which has been used for cooperation between West European countries supporting operations in the Persian Gulf. NATO's relevance is also being challenged by suggestions from the Soviet Union and France that it and the WTO be subsumed by a single organization under the aegis of the thirty-five nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The unprecedented unity and swift action of the United Nations (albeit aided by swifter U.S. leadership) also presents that organization as a potential alternate to the geographically restricted NATO.

E. THE IMPACT OF THE PERSIAN GULF

The Persian Gulf conflict has introduced the issues surrounding U.S. commitments in Europe into the Middle East. Despite the geographical difference, the questions remain largely the same--does the United States contribute excessively, relative to its allies, to supporting interests which are common to all? The policy question of the Cold War, "Should the United States trade Chicago for Berlin?" has become the policy question of the Middle East, "Should the United States sacrifice American soldiers to protect Japanese (or German, or Saudi, or French, etc.) oil?" This oversimplification is designed to elicit a visceral response from the "man on the street", but does so by ignoring important factors, such as the strategic interests of the United States and the nature of the global economy. Conversely, the perception upon which this question is based, and its portent for the future of U.S. foreign policy, can be ignored only at the peril of American interests.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979 elicited the Carter Doctrine, which identified the Persian Gulf and its oil reserves as an area of strategic interest to the United States. Subsequent events, including the Iran-Iraq war and its affect upon the safe passage of tankers carrying oil from the Persian Gulf, brought about another issue which was deleterious to American support for U.S.-sponsored operations in the gulf. The difference in the

degree to which the United States and its allies were dependent upon oil shipped out of the Persian Gulf contributed to American feelings of being manipulated as well, but only through discounting the nature of modern global economics. The global demand for oil is relatively inelastic, and competition for resources characterizes some aspects of relations between industrialized countries. Although Japan, or certain European countries, might obtain a higher percentage of their oil from fields which have been affected by the Persian Gulf crisis than does the United States, the interruption of their customary supplies forces them to seek sources which have not been disrupted. This places the Japanese and Europeans in more direct competition with the United States for oil from sources which otherwise would have been primary suppliers for the United States. The competition forces higher prices, and the U.S. economy suffers as a result. U.S. interests in the Gulf region, therefore, do not necessarily derive from its own oil supply, but rather from the impact which competition for the oil supply in the world at large can have on the U.S. economy.

Another portion of opposition to U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf resides in the fiscal burden borne by the United States in securing safe passage for oil tankers. Estimates of the cost of American escort operations in the Persian Gulf during late 1987 placed the Pentagon's burden at \$20 million per month. This unilateral expenditure compelled the Senate

to pass, by a margin of ninety-five to two, a non-binding resolution which called upon the administration of President R. Reagan to negotiate reimbursement agreements with the oil-producing and oil-purchasing countries which benefitted from America's Persian Gulf operations.¹⁷² In an interesting reversal of Washington's foreign policy warning nearly two centuries earlier, European allies of the United States supported some aspects of the American naval escort operations in the region, but were careful to dissociate themselves from American policies, citing concerns that U.S. decisions could involve the Europeans in a war which was not of their making.¹⁷³ Cooperation between the United States and its European allies was put off for nearly a year, and when it did finally occur, the impetus which brought it about was the ubiquitous and indiscriminate threat posed by mines, not the principle of free navigation endorsed by the United States.¹⁷⁴ This apparent reluctance to cooperate with U.S. efforts from America's allies, all of whom clearly benefitted from U.S. force projection, further exacerbates domestic

¹⁷² Helen Dewar, "Senate Calls for Beneficiaries of Gulf Escorts to Defray U.S. Costs," Washington Post, 08 October 1987, A10.

¹⁷³ Edward Cody, "London, Paris, Bonn Back U.S. Response; Europeans Keep Ships Separate," Washington Post, 20 October 1987, A26.

¹⁷⁴ Edward Cody, "U.S., Europeans Consider Joint Gulf Mine-clearing Operation," Washington Post, 10 September 1988, A12.

American frustrations with inequitable defense burdens in the Alliance.

Restraints which preclude America's allies from providing direct and obvious support to U.S. efforts in the Persian Gulf have contributed even further to domestic dissatisfaction with U.S. support for European defense, resulting in tangible efforts to impose cooperation upon allies who seem reluctant to support mutually beneficial actions. An amendment proposed by Representative D. Bonior in September, 1990 would requires Japan to pay the full cost of U.S. armed forces stationed in Japan, including their salaries, with a ten percent reduction in troops occurring in every year that Japan refused to pay. Congressional support for the Bonior amendment sharply criticizes Japan's "flexible constitution, which conveniently allows the Japanese to let others fight and pay for world order, world peace and the recognition of basic human rights", and also censured Germany for failing to actively support United Nations efforts in the Persian Gulf.¹⁷⁵ Japan, and Europe as a whole, obtain a greater proportion of their oil from the Persian Gulf region, the argument states, and Germany and Japan are two of the world's strongest industrial economies; it is unfair for the United States, the world's greatest debtor nation, to worsen its financial problems simply because no other nation is

¹⁷⁵ R. W. Apple Jr., "Bonn and Tokyo Are Criticized For Not Bearing More of Gulf Cost," New York Times, 13 September 1990, 1.

willing to exhibit the leadership and sacrifice necessary to counter Saddam Hussein's aggression.¹⁷⁶ Congressional and domestic pressure combined to force Bush and his Administration to exert political pressure upon U.S. allies to ante up with financial support for united efforts in the Persian Gulf. The allies have provided these contributions in the form of direct subsidization of U.S. troop deployment and naval patrol costs, and in financial support for countries which have been deleteriously affected by the United Nations embargo of Iraq.¹⁷⁷ If the confrontation in the Gulf region deteriorates into active hostilities, fiscal support is unlikely to assuage American anger at bearing the brunt of the punishment in a Middle East war.

Regardless of how such a war might be resolved, the degree to which American presence in the area predominates would inevitably result in a large number of American casualties. Resentment over the ineffectual military contributions of some allies, as Japan or Germany, would then be likely to emerge from an angry U.S. populace. Isolationist sentiment could easily find in that resentment the fuel it needs to become an influential force in American foreign policy. In this scenario can be seen the same

¹⁷⁶ Robert E. Hunter, "Sharing the Burden in the Gulf," New York Times, 16 August 1990, A21.

¹⁷⁷ R. W. Apple Jr., "Bush Urges Allies to Bear 'Their Fair Share' of Costs of Military Effort in Gulf," New York Times, 31 August 1990, A1.

pattern as was present during the interwar period from 1919 to 1930, when American isolationist sentiment grew as America's World War I allies defaulted on their war loans. The current domestic pressure on the American government to counter allegedly unfair trade practices with damaging tariff barriers would be likely to gain momentum from the backlash of isolationist sentiment emerging from a Middle East war, and follow the pattern of the interwar period even more closely.

Another parallel to the interwar period can be established by substituting for the label "arms merchant" the more current term "oil merchant". Just as the books Merchants of Death and Iron, Blood and Profits sought, in 1934, to define the connection between the U.S. munitions industry and American participation in World War I, future historical studies will seek, if a conflict in the Persian Gulf occurs, to establish the connection between the petroleum industry and U.S. intervention in the Persian Gulf. As described above, the connection does exist, but largely due to the global nature modern, industrialized economies.

F. FOREIGN POLICY: INTERNATIONALISM VERSUS ISOLATIONISM

The emergent fact from post-Cold War debates is that the international order is changing. Upon that observation, however, hinges the entire debate regarding America's role in the changing international order. Nearly all elements of the past one hundred years of U.S. foreign policy are present in

the current debates; isolationists endorse protectionist trade barriers, such as those which impaired the American economy during the 1920's and early 1930's. Such barriers could do even more damage today, as global interdependence is even greater. Another manifestation of isolationist sentiment is found in pressure for unilateral reduction of foreign involvement, and some isolationists attempt to garner domestic support for such reductions by making social welfare programs the beneficiaries of reduced defense expenditures. Withdrawing funds from externally-oriented programs, either defense or foreign aid, and putting those funds to use internally is an inherently isolationist act, unless the reduced foreign expenditure is balanced with a mechanism by which to ensure U.S. influence is still exerted in the arena of international relations. One such mechanism might be a dynamic foreign policy firmly grounded in realpolitik, in which American interests are specifically defined and pragmatically supported. Such policy should recognize the importance of international stability and justice, and promote such values unreservedly.

Another important mechanism for maintaining American influence abroad could be a highly mobile military force, operating in a new and more specialized role within current military alliances and/or international organizations. The structure of such organizations should be more streamlined, with clearly defined responsibilities for providing support

to joint actions conducted under the aegis of the organization. This would help reduce the propensity of the United States to dash to the trumpets with saber drawn, while other countries with the same interests temporize, or downplay their own role.

Interventionalist internationalist are also present, arguing for a continued high level of foreign commitment by the United States, and presenting compelling arguments that the ill-defined shape of the present international environment does not contain sufficient stability to warrant complacency. This group sees continued relevance in a strong, forward-deployed defense which includes nuclear deterrent forces until such time as internal political instability has been resolved by all major powers. Any approach to securing national interests other than the one followed by the United States for the past forty years represents a possible danger of weakness in American foreign policy to this group.

Non-interventionist internationalists are present as well, arguing for maintaining the U.S. presence in international relations, but only within the framework of a supra-national organization, such as the United Nations. The importance of concerted action against aggression by the United Nations has been amply demonstrated by the Persian Gulf crisis, and bodes well for future cooperation along these lines. An inescapable fact, however, is the importance

of American military power and political leadership in achieving that unity. The dynamics of international politics argues against the likelihood of complete success being achieved by status quo organizations, such as the United Nations. Increasing pressures, such as nationalism, population increases, and resource depletion will only serve to increase the difficulties of supra-national organizations. Until those inherent instabilities are resolved, strong leadership, supported by strong military capabilities, will be an important commodity. Additionally, the measures discussed above regarding improvements to international organizations in which the United States participates could provide additional benefits by developing domestic support for an internationalist program.

V. CONCLUSION

The present crisis in the Persian Gulf has revived perennial questions of American statecraft and national security policy. The efficacy of peace and war are joined with a searching for America's appropriate role in a vastly changed world. This debate makes little sense, though, without some careful consideration of the course and evolution of American statecraft and strategy in its entirety. The present study has sought to examine the evolution of a central theme of U.S. diplomacy and strategy, that of isolationism, in its most recent manifestations. As the debate in this country turns on the wisdom or folly of warfare in a post-containment, post-cold war world, participants in the argument make use of ideas and positions the origins of which are shrouded for most in an unknown and seemingly unknowable past. This fact notwithstanding, one can surely argue that American statecraft has evolved over the past two years with certain basic tenets underlying nearly all events. The reluctance to engage in traditional statecraft and strategy, the overarching wish to avoid entangling alliances linked to the blood feuds of the courts has revealed itself in episodes through the history of this republic. Nonetheless, the isolationism of 1799 and 1990 are by no means fully identical. Rather, this sentiment in its

modern form has passed through several distinct phases, which are recapitulated below.

A. WASHINGTON'S ADDRESS--THE TAPROOT OF ISOLATIONISM

American isolationist sentiment is based heavily on the foreign policy statement which President G. Washington bequeathed to the American nation. Although he acknowledged the importance of economic ties in his farewell address, he cautioned the young American government against political ties with the European powers. The world of 1796 allowed America's physical isolation from Europe--geographical insulation and technology which was, by today's standards, primitive bestowed an advantage upon the United States which helped it to defeat Britain's superior military power in the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Additionally, the danger of becoming involved in a war which was not of America's choosing as a result of Napoleon's political ambitions loomed large at the end of the eighteenth century and lent even greater impetus to American desires to keep European quarrels far from America's shores.

Except for a brief flirtation with imperial ambitions involving Cuba and the Phillipines during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the United States hewed closely to the line Washington drew. The Monroe Doctrine, in 1823, sought to counter European designs on New World countries by establishing U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere as an interest which America was willing to defend with military

force. That the United States was committed to the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine was clearly demonstrated later, when that doctrine was cited to justify American intervention against British, German and Italian influence in Venezuela in 1902. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, framed by President T. Roosevelt in 1904, furthered the U.S. goal of keeping European influence out of the New World by stating America's intent to exercise an international police power in case of wrong-doing by powers in the Western Hemisphere which might otherwise compel European intervention. The Roosevelt corollary was later separated from the Monroe Doctrine by the Clark Memorandum of March, 1930, which specified the tenets of the doctrine which the United States government intended to uphold, but the corollary's demonstration of America's commitment to averting European encroachment upon America's sphere of influence is important to recognize. Through these policies, the United States established vehicles through which geographical expressions of isolationism would be protected and European intervention in "America's hemisphere" might be forestalled.

Even the short imperialistic foray of the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has been argued by some to have been motivated more by the need to secure vital commerce and strategic trade routes (the approaches to the future trans-isthmian canal and the trade routes to China) than by a desire to obtain colonial

possessions. Geographical insulation, dissociation from the cultural and institutional mores of the European powers, preoccupation with continental expansion, and technological conditions cooperated to encourage the United States to eschew "entangling alliances" with Europe in the 120 years which separated George Washington's farewell address from President W. Wilson's declaration of war. On the surface, very little difference seems to separate the isolationist policies of 1796 from those of 1917, yet the policies of the eighteenth century insulated the United States from the Napoleonic wars of Europe, while the twentieth century policies, in the very best case, failed to provide that insulation and in the worst case, ensured the U.S. would become embroiled in bloody carnage. It is important, therefore, to recognize the difference between American isolationism of 1917 and its predecessor of 1796.

B. PRE-WORLD WAR I: TRADITIONAL ISOLATIONISM

World War I did not initially shake American isolationist attitudes. Traditional isolationism enabled American business to profit from the European war from 1914 until 1917 without suffering the political or moral disadvantages of becoming directly involved in the war; although popular opinion was generally sympathetic to the Entente, it was even more adamantly isolationist. The population centers of the industrialized areas along the Eastern seaboard of the United States represented the most internationalist elements of

popular American political opinion, but isolationist sympathies predominated throughout the country. As stated earlier, only the publication of the sensational Zimmermann telegram in 1917 sufficiently united the more stringently isolationist elements, which were located generally in rural, western, and southwestern America, to support American involvement in World War I.

Elite opinion in Wilson's administration advocated American intervention on behalf of the Entente for the purpose of preserving a European "balance-of-power" which was more closely aligned with American interests. Both E. M. House, as the President's personal confidant, and Secretary R. Lansing advocated U.S. participation out of sympathies they held for the democracies of the Entente. Yet, as G. F. Kennan points out, U.S. political thought did not fully understand how important Europe's balance of power was to America's security--as Kennan stated it, the United States ". . . entered the right war for the wrong reason."¹⁷⁸

D. F. Fleming also refutes the argument that America entered the war to defend the European balance of power from another perspective, arguing that America's entry into the war occurred while the war was still tied in stalemate, and before the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, in March, 1918, released large numbers of German troops for action against the Entente

¹⁷⁸ Kennan, 62-66.

powers on the Western Front.¹⁷⁹ Nor did popular American opinion, and its manifestation through its elected representatives, significantly ascribe to the view that a specific political system in Europe was essential to American interests. If the balance-of-power argument is insufficient to explain the demise of American isolationism, another answer must be found.

German actions which compromised America's neutrality "rights" were the specific motivations which provided the impetus necessary for the United States to unite sufficiently to go to war. Unrestricted submarine warfare was the only means by which Imperial Germany could hope to inflict upon the Entente powers the same strangulation which Germany was suffering at their hands, but it directly challenged the ultimatum which Wilson had delivered regarding American citizens and vessels. The question of international law is moot--Imperial Germany's U-boat campaign did violate recognized international law, but no more so than British actions during this period, actions which included the mining of the North Sea and English Channel, taking liberties in defining contraband, deceptively flying U.S. flags aboard British merchant vessels, or arming those merchant vessels and ordering them to attack any submarine on sight (which, according to international law, obviated the vessels' non-combatant status). The Wilson administration's avowed

¹⁷⁹ Fleming, 226-228.

commitment to neutrality under the aegis of international law, therefore, was flawed by being based on pillars which both Britain and Germany found necessary to topple in order for each country to further its own war effort.

Wilson's declaration that Imperial Germany would be held strictly accountable for any harm to any American citizen traveling aboard any vessel, without any complimentary restrictions upon the travel of American citizens aboard the vessels of powers engaged in hostilities, was a statement which strikes historians in the late twentieth century as supreme naivete; the presence of an American citizen aboard any merchant vessel was expected to served as an inoculation against attack by a submarine which could have no forewarning of the American's presence. Germany's early acquiescence to Wilson's objections to submarine warfare contributed to the conviction that Germany's actions were unacceptable, and when the German Kaiser succumbed to internal pressures and renewed Germany's U-boat campaign, it was done largely out of the hope that the pressure it would place on the Entente would assist in securing peace negotiations which were favorable to Germany, and with full realization that such action would most likely draw the United States into the war on the side of the Entente.

While the Wilson administration's defense of American neutrality rights was conveniently pro-Entente, the accident of geographic advantage arguably justified such

circumstances; although elements within Wilson's circle of advisors clearly supported the cause of the Entente, efforts to trade with the Central Powers were still allowed by the Wilson administration. That these efforts came to naught resulted more from Britain's domination of the sea lanes and of American trade, than a conscious American decision to handicap Germany. Wilson's efforts to ensure the safety of American citizens led to his decision to hold Germany accountable for injuries incurred by American's as a result of German submarine attacks, regardless of the nationality of the vessel upon which the American injured might have been embarked. The affront to the neutral rights of the United States which resulted from Germany's decision to proceed with unrestricted submarine warfare against the U.S. protestations provided the crisis which overcame isolationist sentiment, and the United States entered into the European conflict.

The failure of pre-World War I neutrality lies primarily in the administration's failure to recognize that American interests could not be served by America's refusal to participate in shaping international relations. A more pragmatic approach by U.S. diplomacy which accepted a role in a politically, economically, and technologically changed world might not have been likely to have prevented the outbreak of the war, but could arguably have created more favorable conditions at its end than the "victor's peace" which the Paris peace conferences and the Treaty of

Versailles imposed upon Germany. As the pre-intervention period of 1914 to 1917 unfolded, however, America's involvement with the democracies ensured it would defend its neutrality through policies which were advantageous to the Entente powers. This choice forced the United States to be increasingly at odds with the Alliance powers, and virtually guaranteed America could not avert its progress along a path which would eventually lead it to Saint Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne, and Versailles.

C. PRE-WORLD WAR II: REVISIONIST ISOLATIONISM

After World War I, the world again seemed safe for democracy to flourish, but the United States once more retracted into its own hemisphere, and eschewed involvement abroad. Congress refused to allow the United States to participate in international organizations, such as the League of Nations or the World Court, which held the potential to avoid or prevent war through arbitration or mutual security. Although the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 gained Senate ratification, it was able to do so only after U.S. Secretary of State F. B. Kellogg assured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States could not be bound by the pact to participate in sanctions or enforcement of its tenets. The victory which ratification of the pact represented for internationalists was based upon by the opportunity which it held to shape American opinion in the event the pact was violated by an aggressive power.

The Senate's refusal to allow America's participation in other international organizations which supported international cooperation to achieve disarmament and/or avert war through peaceful mediation of disputes, derived largely from the same concerns which guided Washington's warning in his farewell address. Just as the first president feared an alliance between the United States and a European power would entangle the United States in a war which grew out of the avarice of the European governments, the American Senate feared, in the post-war period, that American participation in any international security structure would pull America once more into the inferno from which it had just emerged. The perception grew among both popular and elite groups that American blood had been spilled due to the perfidy of greedy industrialists and financiers supported by the U.S. government, or due to the "ambition, rivalry, interest, humor, or caprice" of inter-European relations, and that perception gained credence as both historians and a Senate investigation presented well-supported arguments to that effect.

Other manifestations of isolationism which wreaked havoc during the inter-war period were the various trade and tariff barriers the U.S. government erected. Notable among the actions which represented isolationist influence upon trade policy were the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act in 1922 (which was intended to protect specific industrial and agricultural

production), artificial stimulation of the American shipping industry (which was intended to end U.S. dependence on foreign bottoms), and ultimately, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930 (which was meant to allow struggling American industry to recover from America's economic depression unencumbered by the burden of international competition. These actions were well-intentioned efforts to support American commercial and agricultural interests against foreign competitors, but ultimately contributed to the collapse of the world economy in 1929, and slowed the global economy's recovery thereafter.

Difficulties with reparations and war debts arose from the shattered global economy, and the default of England and France on their war debts to the United States in 1932 contributed even further to popular perceptions that the United States had somehow been "duped" into fighting the Europeans' war. The Nye Committee added to the outrage felt against Europe as it sought to demonstrate that industrialists and financiers had perpetrated a deception upon the U.S. public and administration which led to war. Against this backdrop, isolationism could do nothing other than grow. Some American political leaders who resented the expenditure in blood and capital which intervention in the European war had drawn out of the United States sought to extract lessons from the intervention, and the resulting neutrality legislation represented even greater refinement of

isolationism than the pre-intervention period of World War I had seen. The arms trade, which was forwarded by the Nye Committee as being a significant factor for American involvement in the 1917-1918 conflict, especially became the focus of severe restrictions in legislative efforts to ensure the experience would not be repeated.

The advantage of retrospect reveals an acute irony--efforts to extract lessons from the failure of isolationism in 1917 were directed by isolationist thought. Isolationism had impeded U.S. foreign policy at the outset of the war, when American influence might otherwise have furthered the cause of international peace and prosperity through pragmatic application of America's influence in support of its own interests. Yet the issue of isolation's worthlessness as a guiding principle in American policy held little sway; the perception was that a flawed isolationist policy had caused the United States to go to war, not that U.S. policy had brought on American involvement due to the inherent flaw of isolationism. Against this perspective, the Neutrality Acts were a perfectly logical response--if the weaknesses of traditional isolationism had forced the United States to go to war because American interests became too entangled with the interests of belligerents, then preventing that entanglement should prevent America's involvement in another war.

The initial stages of World War II lent some credibility to revisionist isolationism. The powers of Europe were on the march again--greedy for power, hungry for territory, jealous of each other, they underscored every conviction which held that a reserved attitude towards Europe best supported America's agenda. As with World War I, American opinion supported the Allied cause over that of the Axis powers, but not to the extent of giving them any backing other than encouragement; quite probably, the U.S. reluctance to lend its weight to the cause of Britain and France did more to pave the road which led to the appeasement at Munich in 1938 than did President F. D. Roosevelt's urging the European powers to negotiate.

Roosevelt's struggle to make inroads into the provisions of the Neutrality Acts was necessarily restrained by domestic considerations. America's recovery was his first priority, and Roosevelt's need to maintain a consensus in Congress for recovery programs precluded him from undertaking neutrality revision as aggressively as the international situation might have warranted. Isolationists also used Roosevelt's internationalist policies to attribute to the President the intent to involve America in Europe's war. Events supported Roosevelt's efforts, however, and made possible the "cash-and-carry" and Lend-Lease bills which circumvented many of the restrictions which were placed upon support to Britain by the legislation which had evolved from the lessons drawn from

the failure of traditional isolationism. The final, overwhelming blow to pre-World War II revisionist isolationism came with dreadful clarity in December, 1941.

D. THE COLD WAR: INTERVENTIONIST INTERNATIONALISM

The post-World War II relaxation again found the United States returning to its own hemisphere, but with less isolationist conviction than before the war. America had marched into the war reluctantly, but when the war ended the country had strode forth as the only true superpower. The economy was strong, the country was united, industry was intact, and the United States had sole possession of the most terrible weapon on the face of the Earth.

The World War I model of isolation fell victim to the caprice of Mars, illustrating the fallacy of a policy which contains the expectation of conducting "business as usual" during a war between major powers when the interruption of that business serves the strategic interests of the warring powers. The propensity of the U.S. to serve as the "arsenal of democracy" made the supply lines which linked American industry with the Entente soldier important targets for German interdiction, and inevitably drew the United States into the war.

The World War II model of isolation had fared no better. Technology had shrunk the world to such a degree that geographic isolation no longer provided sanctuary. The notion that drawing into a hemispheric shell and refusing all

intercourse with warring powers would insulate a resource-laden continent from the covetousness of a fascist dictator was proven false, and even as Roosevelt and his administration sought to overcome the revisionist isolationism of post-World War I America, forces were in motion over which the United States had no control, unless it had been willing to embark upon the dynamic and coercive foreign policy which popular sentiment and legislative pressure had previously prohibited.

The period following both wars saw America returning to preoccupation with its own affairs. Whereas the post-World War I era provided nearly twenty years before conflict once again stalked the Earth, the post-World War II era was almost immediately rent with the ideological conflict between communism and democracy. Isolationism did not have an opportunity to re-emerge before American society was again faced with a vital external threat. That the United States was the only industrialized country capable of rebuffing communist efforts in war-ravaged Europe was clearly evident, and the nature of the communist threat--a political challenge backed by ill-concealed military intimidation--demanded of the United States both economic and military support as a counter. The ideological battle between European communism, sponsored by the Soviet Union, and the democracies of Western Europe, allied with the United States, fashioned the Euro-American relationship for the next four and one-half decades.

The initial reluctance of the U.S. government to involve the country in a long-term, entangling alliance with European countries harkened back to 1796, when George Washington cautioned against exactly such an endeavor, but the world of 1948 was profoundly different from the world of 1796. Events in Europe were important because America could not avoid being affected, and no degree of abstention from involvement abroad could change that fact. The shots fired at Sarajevo might have seemed a distant and scarcely newsworthy act to nearly every American in 1914, but those two shots were the precursors of millions of echoes which resonated through Europe over the next thirty-one years. Even after the European powers were locked at each other's throat, the American government sought to keep the country aloof, although through its efforts at doing so the Wilson administration created conditions which required the United States to enter the war as a matter of honor, rather than a matter of pragmatic interest.

As with the traditionalist isolationism of the pre-World War I period, pre-World War II revisionist isolationism ensured America would take no action to defend its reasonable interests until forced to do so. Although the nature of isolationism had changed, its character remained the same. George Kennan presents an excellent description of America's repeated refusal to respond to threats until forced to do so, likening a democratic government to

. . . one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin: he lies there in his comfortable primeval mud and pays little attention to his environment; he is slow to wrath--in fact, you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed; but, once he grasps this, he lays about him with such blind determination that he not only destroys his adversary but largely wrecks his native habitat. You wonder whether it would not have been wiser for him to have taken a little more interest in what was going on at an earlier date and to have seen whether he could not have prevented some of these situations from arising instead of proceeding from an indiscriminating indifference to a holy wrath equally indiscriminating.¹⁸⁰

Clinging to isolationism as a guidepost for international policy imperiled America's interests even more thoroughly prior to World War II. Technological advances had created new and more efficient ways to drain the lifeblood of nations, and a unique juxtaposition of dictators leading powerful governments, the conditions imposed by the "victors' peace" of Versailles, and a powerful government's abdication of responsibility for exerting a stabilizing influence on international relations brought the world once again to the battlefield.

Hard-won lessons hammered home a critical fact to U.S. policy-makers--the future of America could be foreseen in the future of Europe. After World War II, America almost immediately began the large-scale military draw-down which had marked a U.S. reversion to isolationism on previous occasions. When the events which marked the agenda of communism in Europe--Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and

¹⁸⁰ Kennan, 66.

Greece, to name only the more outstanding examples--presented the irrefutable fact that America's interests were threatened once again, the early and unmistakable manifestations of post-war isolationism were overcome, and the first "entangling alliance" was born. That the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has endured, and the American commitment to Europe's defense has been maintained, can be largely attributed to the persistence of the Soviet-led Warsaw Treaty Organization, and the ideological confrontation between the two alliances, as vital, defined threats to America's interests.

E. POST-COLD WAR: NON-INTERVENTIONIST INTERNATIONALISM?

The page of history has now turned on the communist threat to America's interests. The Berlin Wall has fallen. The communist bloc is in free-fall, and is fracturing into individual countries which are spiraling toward new, and as yet vague and nebulous forms of representative government. Out of the centrifugal explosion of the Soviet-led bloc has come a popular perception that the "Cold War" is all but over. With the diminution of the long-standing communist threat, and the reduced credibility of the Warsaw Treaty Organization as a politically cohesive military alliance, the rationale for the current level of American commitment to European defense is increasingly difficult to support. The difference between the expenditures which were rationalized as being necessary to counter the previous level of communist

threat and the reduced levels which should be needed to defend a wall which has been reduced to rubble and borders which have become permeable is being referred to as a "peace dividend" which can be diverted to programs which support American social and economic welfare. This line of reasoning follows very closely on the retreat from international commitments which America took at the close of both world wars, and largely chooses to ignore the fact that Europe does not represent America's total defense requirement. The recent events in the Persian Gulf should clearly indicate that the United States should display great interest in actively exerting its influence abroad.

The U.S. population is ever more aware of the economic nature of international competition, and with the reduced external crisis, and is increasingly supportive of non-interventionist foreign policy. Non-interventionist foreign policy gains credibility from the successes, however limited, which the United Nations has enjoyed thus far in responding to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. The unity of the United Nations Security Council, and of the membership of the United Nations at large in responding to Iraqi aggression in the Persian Gulf region, strengthens the arguments of non-interventionists and represents the possibility of achieving the ascendancy of the principle of law over that of anarchy which Woodrow Wilson sought early in the twentieth century.

Even as non-interventionist policy garners support, however, the arguments regarding burdensharing gain credibility from events in the Persian Gulf region. The United States possesses powerful and very mobile armed forces. These forces, coupled with the demonstrated leadership of the United States during the past five decades, encourages other nations to expect America to serve as the vanguard in countering aggression. That the position of leadership does not necessarily command the loyalty of followers has been repeatedly demonstrated--the Euro-Soviet pipeline disagreement between the United States and West Europeans, the disagreement regarding tanker operations in the Persian Gulf region, and other disputes between the United States and its allies clearly show that being the majority shareholder does not necessarily convey the ability to dictate terms to the partners. As supra-national organizations, such as the United Nations, rise in importance, domestic resistance to being the major contributor to military support for the status quo will inevitably increase.

Based upon the historical progression demonstrated by this paper, as the tension of the Cold War continues to recede, American popular opinion is likely to increasingly press for legislative representatives to once again stress internal priorities over external priorities. This pressure is already beginning to manifest itself in calls for

increased burdensharing, pressure for unilateral troop withdrawals from Europe, and insistence upon immediate and unstructured cuts in American military strength. Failure to recognize the political potential of isolationist sentiment invites needless and crippling restrictions on American influence in international relations.

The United States of America and its armed forces face an extraordinary period of change in the wake of the Cold War and the transformations of the international system of states. The fate of American power abroad is closely linked with the debate within this country about the purpose of such power and the sources of its strength. In the view of many in public life, the economic decline of the United States has weakened the basis for such power in a dangerous fashion. This view was put forward most forcefully in 1987 in the work of Yale University's Professor Paul Kennedy. Never very far from this debate, which has advanced fairly without pause since the middle of the second Reagan administration, has been the ideal of the United States attending to its own matters and turning its back on an ungrateful and inflexible world of hostilities and blood feuds. In this expression of a desire to turn away, the participants embrace what is in fact a very old ideal of U.S. statecraft, that of isolationism.

The preceding study has addressed the evolution of this ideal, seeing in it a constant of U.S. political life and

statecraft, which nonetheless has evolved in turn with the character of this nation and the world system of states. In making this assertion, one recalls that certain dilemmas, certain problems, and certain issues remain constant. Yet the circumstances surrounding these debates have changed fundamentally. The efficacy of non-interventionist internationalism must await its test in practice in the world being born in the wake of the Cold War and the advent of Iraqi great-power politics in the Persian Gulf. At all times, the experience of the past weighs heavily on the makers of policy and inevitably shapes the choice they make and the policy they put in hand.

The challenge which faces the United States, with its legacies of statecraft and its tendency to retreat into a clean and safe paradise that surely never really existed, lies simply in the diplomatic and military record of the twentieth century. The new system must pass the test of the old; whatever the American people and government might choose to do with the diplomacy and strategy of this country on the brink of the new century, they must recall the accomplishments of the generations that preceded them as they so eagerly recall those same generations' failures and shortcomings. The past includes far more than merely Munich and Danang. Rather it is the combination of these two points in time and much more. The record of U.S. involvement overseas in the Cold War seems to have been something of a

success. The record of U.S. withdrawal and introspection seems to have been something of a disaster. These insights are a warning and a reminder to those who are unheedful of the past.

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